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VAMPIRE EPIC IN ALL HIS EVIL GLORY
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JESUS FRANCO'S MANHUNTER

Front Inside Cover

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MEXI-MONSTER MELT-DOWN

BY STEVE FENTONE

Mexican B-films, but especially Mexi-monster movies (hereinafter referred to as "MMM") seem to be generally held in low esteem, and are often outright reviled by even those select few who might otherwise be exponents of the lowliest-of-low in diverse international cinecrap. Whereas ethnic works from Italy, Spain, France, Hong Kong and nowadays even Brazil (eg: the long-elusive output of mad movie maestro Jose Mojica Martins) seem to be gobbled up voraciously by an increasing number of loyal enthusiasts, many still seem ignorant of—or perhaps simply indifferent to—the wealth of obscure delights waiting to be unearthed down Mexico way, especially in the horror, and more specifically monster genre.



Alex Ward captures the madness of *LADRÓN DE CADAVERES*

Mexican horror films are often largely imitations, cheap and puny rehashings of established U.S. horror clichés. Mexican monster movies in particular are guilty of this, but simultaneously admit their own unmistakable cultural characteristics as defined and singular as Japan's giant rubber monster machines or Europe's Gothic horror past. Undoubtedly Mexican movie time, like most of the country's other popular domestic genres, extensively borrow from (some might say plagiarize) the Hollywood "Golden Age" of the Thirties to the Fifties (and more independent Mexican horror artists include **EL PANTANITO DEL CONVENTO** [1971] **THE GHOST OF THE CONVENT** [c] Fernando de Fuentes and **EL BAUL MACABRO** [1976] **THE MACABRE TRUNK**, D. Miguel Zambrano, 1936). Pore of the US-orientated MÚLTI almost invariably incorporate tried-and-true plot archetypes, though are infused with a personal signature mark of the distinct Mexican style.

As with most music, film types evoke various reactions. Academic study of MMM is pretty much a relatively new consideration. The following issues in an article are a dimension of their own creation: making judgements, making critical analyses (about or without), and making judgements about the quality of those judgements. This also involves making judgements, or assessments, about those who are judged on their terms, minus too many little preconceptions or fifty expectations. Chances are if you come in excessively biased against them, you're not going to change your prejudices by watching. Grace your mind. Keep your brain in a blank state, and simply permit their meticulous approach to have its way with you. In regard to some of the more oddball MMM logic, merely suspending your patterns of belief—i.e., the judgments of a critic!

Jach Taylor, an American-born actor usually based in Spain, spent some time in Mexico during the mid-1960s doing westerns and an episode of *SHEENA, QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE*. Billed pseudonymously as "Dark Martin," he filled supporting roles in two notable MMAs staged by the NCST RADAMUS company (as well as the first three adventures of the masked monster wrestler "Mauron" [The Atomic-Supremo]). "Mauron" collaborated on a career-spanning interview with porno-father Taylor which encompassed his little-known early Mexican tenure. On the topic of the nation's apparent fascination with fantasy monsters and legends, Taylor remarked: "Mexico is really a fantastic country. I mean it's a fantasy land. There's really built into the genes of the people into the minds. People will tell you the most amazing stories with a straight face."

Taylor went on to record a tale concerning an ugly little mythical creature spoken of by superstitious peasants. If you could manage to capture this imaginary "Tjennel" and not be alarmed by its hideous appearance when you took a home and fed it warm milk it would shake its body in contentment and emit a shower of gold coins in gratitude. "I had a lady swear to me that her mother had one." Taylor concluded his story.

As the title is enough to tell, Mexico's most cherished folklore has undergone revisions as filmmakers offer the land the love of tall tales encompassing fantastic mythical entities. For instance, another supernatural creature indigenous to Mexico legend is a Llorona ("The Weeping Woman"). Closely aligned with Gaelic/Celtic legends of howling female spirit-called banshees, a Llorona was a similarly horror she spirit-called banshees of what were said to torment down those that heeded no. She found her way to Mexican screens upon numerous occasions. **LIVELY IN LALLORONA** ("THE CRYING WOMAN") (Ramon Roca 1923 remake by Ram6 Cardenas in 1959). The 1923 version was followed by **LA LLEGADA DE LALLORONA** ("THE LEGACY OF THE CRYING WOMAN") (Miguel M. Magallana 1940). **EL CINTO DE LA MUJER DEL VIVO COPPIN** ("Fernando Mendez 1951). **LA LALLORONA EN LALLORONA** ("THE CURSE OF

THE CRYING WOMAN (D. Rafael Gualón, 1961) and SANTO Y MANTEQUILLA NÁPOLES EN LA VENGANZA DE LA LLORONA: SANTO AND MANTEQUILLA NÁPOLES IN THE REVENGE OF THE CRYING WOMAN (D. Miguel M. Delgado, 1973).

Origin of such films seems hardly surprising, coming from a country where the low paid "common man" *bachchanis* (workers) are frequently elevated to the esteemed status of folk superheroes. This by an adoring public that seemingly remains oblivious to the fading line that usually separates fantasy from reality. Such observations witness worship and blurring of the boundary between the real and unreal seems to be as relevant social critiques for the country's doomsdayen pastime masses. A seeming unconditional acceptance of fantasy is also evident in the adaption of several literary classics (Hong Kong's mythical brand movies are magic most readily springs to mind). Mexico is no exception. Monsters and fantasy play an important role in her popular culture, so it is only natural that the country's pop film industry accepted them with notable relish.

Because the article shall try to limit itself strictly to bonafide MONGSTER titles, I have decided to gather analogous links into block categories. For instance *wurawole*, *vampires*, *zombies* you get the gist. Crossovers from category to category are inevitable such as *halloween* and *gothic* or *dependent* sub-genres, but I have tried not to be too repetitive. The most obvious oversights are necessarily to portray a very *MIM* was made, but it's pretty briefly touch upon some of the best, most interesting, worst and/or weirdest examples.

LUCHADORES
CONTRA MONSTRUOS
MASKED MAULERS vs. MEXI-MONSTERS

When it comes to thinking of MM, eventually the indigenous ways incorporating material objectives should seem to mind less. So much about diving into your skull from the inside out. *Colours* and *acoustic* are the two superlatives that might arise with mindless lies are certainly not useless phenomena. Witness for example, Japan's ULTRAMAN, never mention a slave of obscure Toku-SUPERMAN movies. I've already Marica a pretty earthy style, this style is not a simple, it's a minimalist, and especially those including materialistic. Many people regard it as the "choreography" and "unpleasant" films as tonight worthless garbage, and how a purely aesthetic standpoint they are possibly right. But we're reading WINTER INTERMEDIATE, and about purely aesthetic standpoints?

Even powering fan-oriented publications like the late Calvin Beck's inspirational *CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN* routinely lists appearances on often very worthwhile Mexican affairs. *G.O.F.* demands that one write (horror film) *LA INVASION DE LOS VAMPIROS: INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES* as title and routine, but at least forced-up to six nice screenshots. Basic atmosphere is sometimes the sole available commodity in films that offer only the soundest series of scenes, soundscapes and scenarios. As far as the lurid horror flicks are concerned though, just bear in mind the following golden rule: seeing a film with a masked wrestler may be desirable, but seeing one with a masked wrestler and a monster is damned essential!

The seminal insider wrestling effort came with Fernando Mendez's amazing **LAORON DE CADÁVERES** (1998), viciously translated over the years to be everything from **THE BODY SNATCHER** to **THIS IS CORPSES**. The film didn't star or feature El Santo, contrary to common reports and published evidence (he may well have been edited in on re-sale, but this is neither the time nor place to launch that debate).

LADRÓN established a great roster of durable luchador contra monstruo clichés. Key elements of its plot (i.e. its misguided surgeon conducting experiments to turn top athletes into supersubhuman monsters) resurfaced in at least two René Cardona films: *LAS LUCHADORAS CONTRA EL MEDICO ASESINO/DOCTOR OF DOOM* (1962), as well as the film's remake: *LA NORRIPILANTE BESTIA HUMANA/NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES* (1968). Related movie elements can be found even in Cardona's *LAS LUCHADORAS CONTRA EL ROBOT ASESINO/THE WRESTLING WOMEN VS. THE KILLER ROBOT* (1964).

While Santodonato's really some anti-life genius, a film personality until 1958 (he'd also written a pair of extremely-sub-par Max/Cuban films "Thriller" starring Joseph Cotten), **LADRÓN DE CADÁVERES** helped further cement his star. Mito Ruzicka's reputation as one of wailing cinema's most infrequent victims. He possessed the malleable combined with the muscle demanded of comic-book heroes. While it's kaffee-kiss film experience dated back to the early '50s, but he also essayed a part made famous by Marlon Brando — that of Stanley Kowalski — in a homegrown Max theatrical version of "A Streetcar Named Desire," perhaps as far removed from life/comicbookdom as you can get. Ruzicka's got him back track by portraying black-masked sniper super-bomb "Naután" in a sense of five films. Also called that adventure band-tearback for decades in numerous reference guides as "NEUTRÓN TRAPS THE INVISIBLE KILLERS" is in actuality an unrelated rerited Cardona film from 1964 called **EL ASESINO INVISIBLE IS THE INVISIBLE KILLER**.

Symonds, Matsun's first trilogy of film adaptations was *NEUTRÓN, EL ENMASCARADO NEGRO* (NEUTRON AND THE BLACK MASK: NEUTRON CONTRA EL DR. CARONTE NEUTRÓN Y LOS AMAZIGAS DE LA MUERTE: NEUTRÓN AGAINST THE DEATH ROBOTS) (C. Federico Guala 1959-60). These pitted Neutron against the mad Dr. Caronte (played by white-masked "Señor de Botocane," aka Rafael Riquelme). Caronte concocted amongst other things "Death Robot" monsters—lurching, lumpy-faced hatchlings doted in buggy body suits—who infest megatons of lead to kill the world by performing a devastating neutron bomb on Neutron (the hero, not the bomb) plus a trip to all four of the final reel of Chapter Three with the assistance of Jack Taylor ("Grok Meep") as the brave and discombobulated Professor Thomas

Neuville was just one among many identity-cognitive superheroes who periodically battled with monsters. Usually though when you consider the time "masked wrestling monster time," the name of El Santo should arise as an archetypal hero. First, you'd best begin questioning whether you truly deserve your Monster International membership. *—michaels*

a blasphemous – internalized plot, not always necessarily quasi – El Demoniaco del ‘Silver Screen’ (aka *Alejandro Cruz*), *Mil Milésimas* or ‘Thousand Miles’, aka *Ayer* (Rovinsky), and other anti-socials fought with monsters on film. Perhaps last and least in overall movie output and quality of finished product was Hurdineo or ‘Hurdineo’ (Ramírez (aka David Silver)), Ramírez’s main claim to fame (said to be his former effusive pro-wrestling client (now perpetuated by his successor, H.R. Jr.) along with the fact that he was an ardent patron of the Silver Masted One’s (son).) Hurdineo cinematic escapades were far less auspicious. Of his fiction or to money filmic foray, only *LA VENGANZA DE NURACAN RAMIREZ: THE VENGEANCE OF HURDINEO RAMIREZ* (© Juanito Rodríguez 1967) featured anything that might chance to be classified as a ‘monster’ (namely a poverty-stricken, *skelly*Hebeesman created by an insane Demoniaco’s animal carnal engineer/brain coupled with some of the worst time-lapse/double-exposure photography ever. Lately, Hurdineo (R)

career as legitimate (bawdy) by Italian director, who headlined the unforgivably ghastly short-on-video "production" **HURACÁN CONTRA LOS TERRORISTAS: HURRICANE VS. THE TERRORISTS** (D. Juan Rodríguez, 1980). This contained no real monsters, though a rotten-faced zombie shows up in a brief nightmare sequence. This one taken monstrosity reference sums up the extent of Huracán's Mac legacy.

On the other hand, El Sarto's movie monster-reading career was as prolific and prestigious as Romero's was puffy and pathetic. Sarto (D. Gennaro de Puga) grappled valiantly with most of the customary monster species, from vampire (a LOT of those) to mutants to aliens to werewolves to assorted whisks mutated from various established pulp origins. A few of his better films were even honoured with limited international distribution, but Sarto himself was often renamed for foreign markets. In the USSR, he became known variously as "The Sun" (the literal translation of his Spanish handle) or "Samson" (in Italy he became "Agos") in Germany "Superheld" "Superhero", in France he was actually christened "Superstar". Sarto's finest cinematic period was without question the early 1960s. Such distastefully erasent megaclassics as **SANTO CONTRA LAS MUJERES VAMPIROS**, **SANTO AND THE VAMPIRE WOMEN** (1961) and **SANTO EN EL MUJED DE CERIAS**, **SANTO IN THE WAXMUSEUM** (1963) remain prime Sar-tonian choices. The former typified a easy sort of top-heavy romances in Italy eye-roller, as well as at least one werewolf, while the latter contained most of the classic monster repertoires, including

wannabe Frankenstein monster job very similar to the copyrighted Karl/Luck Perce conception.

Sarto (Rodolfo Guzmán Huerta) was beneath the mask in belted and steel he played in numerous other monstrosity someone or awful adventures. Of over 50 films in all, less than half contain monsters of sorts. Most of the titles are self explanatory: **SANTO CONTRA LOS ZOMBIES: INVASION OF THE ZOMBIES** (D. Sarto, Alcala, 1961), **SANTO CONTRA EL ESPECTRO DEL ESTRANGULADOR**, **SANTO VS. THE GHOST OF THE STRANGLER** (D. René Cardona, 1963), **SANTO VS. LA INVASION DE LOS MARCIANOS**, **SANTO VS. THE MARTIAN INVASION** (D. Alfredo G. Cevallos, 1966), **SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA LOS MONSTRUOS**, **SANTO AND BLUE DEMON VS. THE MONSTERS** (D. Oliberto Martinez Solares, 1969), **SANTO CONTRA LA HUA DE FRANKENSTEIN**, **SANTO VS. FRANKENSTEIN'S SLAUGHTER** (D. Miguel Delgado, 1971), **SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA EL DR. FRANKENSTEIN**, **SANTO AND BLUE DEMON VS. DR. FRANKENSTEIN** (D. Miguel M. Delgado, 1973), etc.

As well as monsters, Sarto polished off such slacker B-grade criminal elements as gangsters, counterfeiter and even Nazis (the biggest monsters of all?). He made a handful more chases (the early '80s, including his penultimate and **EL PUÑO DE LA MUERTE**: **THE FIST OF DEATH** and **LA FURIA DE LOS KARATECAS**: **THE FURY OF THE KARATE KILLERS**) (two very similar movies being recast by Alfredo G. Cevallos, 1981). Despite nominal promise of

mental arts mayhem, they do fit our rigorous Mac monster criteria. However, any literary critics present—namely a few very-bought "wolfman" types—are eclipsed by the monstrous two-headed gargantuan of sex icon Guise Rani's *peluch* (that means *tit*). El Sarto retired from the screen shortly thereafter, (how could he compete with salacious Rani's suggestive adult items?) he died of a heart attack in 1984 and the world's been a much sadder place.

THE BRAINIAC

IN A CLASS BY ITSELF:

In addition to the unique brand of wrestling films, MMM also encompassed a substantial number of "strange" monster films in both contemporary and period settings. One of the true wonders of non-wrestling Mexican monster cinema: **EL BARON DEL TERROR**: **THE BARON OF TERROR** (D. Chano Urueta, 1981) will sound much more familiar under its famous K. Gordon Murray release title **THE BRAINIAC**. Murray's several dozen strong "Spooker" package that was sold strictly to US tv in English-dubbed state during the 80s boasted many of the finest MMM. However, it is **THE BRAINIAC** which remains one of the strangest and most wonderful acquisitions ever imported. After being infrequently mentioned in Mexican filmage, it stands out in standing alone as a totally unique concept of pedigreed sorts, completely unrelated to the original genre of the eerily similar "The Case of the Accused Werewolf" (which was a dark and grimy affair, later to stand reeve in his "underground" reputation). We will have been misled from "Baron" to "Baron" to "The Baron of the Demon Black Sunday" (1962). These similarities and woven into **THE BRAINIAC**'s Chinese stock storyline is a poorly snatched "freaky-headed monstrosity" sailor **BRAINIAC** himself, with a program for purging out assigned veritable victims brains, using his warped forked tongue. **THE BRAINIAC** has no equivalent in the movie world. Despite its spectrum of performance, clearly personifies the MMM myth. It is the prototypical example by which all others may be measured. And the absolute optimum place to start if you're of a mind to cultivate an appetite for either Mexican monster film — or human brains.

LOS VAMPIROS & LAS VAMPIRAS

MALE AND FEMALE BLOODSUCKERS, ETC.

As in many worldwide horror film markets, vampires were probably the most prolific and steadily employed monsters within all of Macconaria. Beginning with Carlos Hilario's variation on Lugosi's the Spanish language cult **DRACULA** (1931), the better Mexican vampire films — primarily the monochromatic ones — were among the most abundant and picturesque in all MMM.

Standouts in the undead sub-genre are Fernando Wenzel's (he of **LADRON DE CADAVERES** alias) frequently elegant **EL VAMPIRO THE VAMPIRE** and a delectably supernatual **EL LAZO DEL VAMPIRO THE VAMPIRE'S COFFIN** (both 1957). The strongly choreographed duels attain a plateau of elegant elegant duels seldom reached in even the much lauded manner "house" sagas. The 1957 Wenzel film is a more traditional turn, (some romance with the second vampire), is continuous before in an urban locale. It offers some "horrorish atmospheric" light and shadow chiaroscuro camera compositions, worthy of the finest in German Expressionism and American noir. A major sub-plot



unfolds in a wax museum/fortune-chamber (no doubt influenced by André De Toth's 1953 **HOUSE OF WAX** [see museum figure prominently in a large number of Mex-horrs, including Rafael Ballester's virtual **HOUSE OF WAX** remake **MUSEO DEL HORROR** [MUSEUM OF HORROR 1964] and Jaime Salvador's **LA SEÑORA MUERTE** [LADY DEATH 1967]) Stepping into **EL VAMPIRO** a show, and the Mexican monster hall of infamy was instant star Germán Robles ("Edward Teller" in some foreign releases, for instance the German print of **COFFIN** [known as **DER SARG DES VAMPIRO**]) Robles played the charismatic Count Lizardo/Dual with aristocratic detachment, pale hair and rich-long eyelashes. The portrait of Robles in character as the Count is — along with O. Santo's familiar enmashed visage — perhaps the most instantly recognizable image in all Mexploitation.

Ironically, Mexico's greatest vampiric thespian also had the name for himself as a stage actor playing Biblical characters in passion plays like **PROCESO A JESUS** [TRIAL OF JESUS 1952]. This theatrical production was staged specially for the Archbishop of Mexico (it also featured Robles, Spanish-born American colleague from the **NOCTURNAL** serial Jack Taylor). However, it is for Robles' commanding portrayals of undead bloodsucking aristos in films like **EL VAMPIRO** dual his spoof career in **EL CASTILLO DE LOS MONSTRUOS** [THE CASTLE OF THE MONSTERS 1954] and his frost-adapted characterization, and even the Argentinian-made **EL VAMPIRO ASCHERAI** [THE VAMP RESTRIKES/THE LURKING VAMPIRE 1959] that have made him one of Mexploitation's most easily identifiable faces. He is the Mexican Chas Lee, or perhaps more accurately a Mexican precursor to Italian gangster Walter Brandi. Robles was henceforth to be almost exclusively associated with cultured vampiric roles.

Germán Robles belatedly returned to the bloodsucker genre for **LOS VAMPIROS DE COYOACÁN** [THE VAMPIRES OF COYOACÁN] (O. Arturo Martínez 1972). Surprisingly, he did not fill the expected 'lead vampire's cape, and was a heroic character for a change. **COYOACÁN** is a loose companion piece to same director Martínez's much earlier **LAS NOVIAS DE SAN ÁNGEL** [THE MUMMIES OF SAN ÁNGEL] (also 1972), in that it stars multi-masked luchador M. Mescame (jolly assisted by tag partner Superdón, note type). **COYOACÁN**'s routine vampirized charmpunks, but bolstered by some eerie ambience, a handful of tasty killer scenes (what other kind are there?) and a remarkably well accomplished near-top-western transmigration. But, truth be told Robles was rather wasted in the film.

A less familiar Mexploitation face many might be hard pressed to attach a name to belongs to one Yenyé Benítez, who was Robles' British assistant in **THE VAMPIRE'S COFFIN**. Benítez also appeared in a vampire comedy called **¿CHEVNI? AL VAMPIRO** [BRING ME THE VAMPIRE] (O. Alfredo B. Grevinca 1961), as well as many non-vampire horror/monster pictures. He usually portrayed second-string acrobat/benchmen or criminal degenerates in the healthy number of MiMi he appeared in. These encompassed some of the very BEST 35s efforts (**LADRON DE CADÁVERES**) some of the 60s worst (Gloria Karloff's **LA CÁMARA DEL TERROR** [THE FEAR CHAMBER 1968]) as well as one of the 70s wackiest (René Cardona's bizarre **EL INCREÍBLE PROFESOR ZÓVEK** [THE INCREDIBLE PROFESSOR ZÓVEK 1971]). Benítez never played a monster per se. The striking fact alone that he was a homelier facial hybrid of Karloff and Spanish



ABOVE: A drooling monster from René Cardona's **EL INCREÍBLE PROFESOR ZÓVEK**.

BELOW: **THE BRAINIAC** strikes!



elocmaster Howard Vernon as one of at least a passing nod here! They're sent opposite Felles in **THE VAMPIRE'S COFFIN** (a perhaps his most audacious, repulsive role).



As a consequence of Germán Robles' popularity from the **VAMPIRO** duo (almost simultaneous to the rise of Hammer Film's **DRACULA** cycle), a plethora of movie-flick vampire melodramas resulted. **EL MUNDO DE LOS VAMPIROS: THE WORLD OF THE VAMPIRES** (D. Alfonso Cornejo Blake, 1962) emerges as one of the campiest and most obviously choreographed. Its Roblesian vampire lord, skull bedecked supernatural pope opion, battles as his poetic vampy-wars and solemn procession of pug-nugly minions converging on their Satanic Majesty's underground crypt cavern envelops the peculiar start of supreme Mexican camp.

Further primo examples of the distinct Mexican vampire style can be seen in another complementary twosome. Miguel Miraflores is atrociously saturated **LA INVASIÓN DE LOS VAMPIROS: THE INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES** (1961) and its sequel **EL VAMPIRO SANGRIENTO: THE BLOODY VAMPIRE** (1962). **EL CONDE FRANKENHAUSEN: COUNT FRANKENHAUSEN** (Forrestas and/or horrendously lecherous SM tone) and Carlos Agostí's second Count Frankenstein dominated Agostí was and/or horrendously eternal Mexican monster future. His conclusive vice numbering such films as **DR SATÁN Y LA MAGIA NEGRA: DR SATAN VS. BLACK MAGIC** (D. Rogelio A. González Jr., 1967) and **THE WRESTLING WOMEN VS. THE KILLER ROBOT** (D. René Cardona, 1966).

In **INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES AND THE BLOODY VAMPIRE**, director Montoya completely combined a funeral black damage pulled by slow motion, horses, a deliciously audacious stiff winged bat-cum-hung glider with Tony Suga Barry sets and outfits of dry ice fog. If you took a knife you could easily slice hunks of atmosphere off these two films like cheese. They even somehow had room left for well-litged neo-classical vampire burials (the predated and nearly lost) faded Romero's **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** by more than a half-decade.

Selective predatory vamp-wars have of course been a main facet of most international blood-curdle industries, and Mexico was certainly no exception. Vampire seductresses with almond eyes and molar breasts also figure prominently (ahem) in a small sub-genre of Mexican monster cinema. They most notably appear in above-mentioned **SANTO CONTRA LAS MUJERES VAMPIRO** (D. Alfonso Cornejo Blake, 1961) headed up by sultry Cult Queen Lorena Velázquez and her vampirized beauteous boys. Lorena reprised her role in Jose Diaz Morise's **ATAGAN LAS BRUJAS: THE WITCHES ATTACK** (1964), a Santo opus involving alleged ghostly bitcherches that was literally a verbatim but uncredited

remake of **MUJERES VAMPIRO**. Sex-once Velázquez acted in numerous B-film genres. She's most remembered for her horror movies, and especially ones in which she teamed up with voluptuous she-cat Elizabeth Campbell as a female wrestling tag team (i.e. **LAS LUCHADORAS CONTRA EL MEDICO ASESINO** and **LAS LUCHADORAS CONTRA LA MONIA**, both D. René Cardona, 1962/64).

As far as fitting vampire ballenas in midnight body stockings and corseted-edge Raygrapes go, **LAS VAMPIROS: THE VAMPIRE GIRLS** (D. Federico Comel, 1965) simply couldn't be surpassed. Tootie in Millicent again as the buxty hero Joan Cardine as a decrepit, caged vampire, and some wobbly cardboard bottom strings, and the film's combination just can't be beat. Comel stuck again with **SANTO EN LA VENGANZA DE LAS MUJERES VAMPIRO: SANTO IN THE VENGANCE OF THE VAMPIRE WOMEN** (1970) another wrestler outing with murderous blood-drinking Mexicanas.

Voracious vampirettes made yet another appearance in René Cardona's **SANTO EN EL TESORO DE DRACULA: SANTO IN DRACULA'S TREASURE** (1967). An alternate version designated for release to certain more pensive "adult only" markets (and using the Comment) was retitled **EL VAMPIRO Y EL SEXO: LOVELY THE VAMPIRE AND SEX!** The sexed-up version contained a bevy of staided seductions whose topless femme pulchritude was more explicitly exposed than in the "tasteful" version. Knowing a lucrative trend when he/she/didn't on his strips, famed Mexican director/writer/actor Cardona released limited editions of three subsequent vampire monster wrestling films. These were: **LA HORRIFANTE BESTIA HUMANA: NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES**, **LAS LUCHADORAS CONTRA EL ROBOT ASESINO: THE WRESTLING WOMEN VS. THE**

KILLER ROBOT and **SANTO CONTRA LOS JINETES DEL TERROR: SANTO VS. THE TERROR RIDERS**. These three were remade **HORROR Y SEX: HORROR AND SEX**, **EL ASESINO LOCO Y EL SEXO: THE MAD KILLER AND SEX** and **Y LEPROSOS Y EL SEXO: THE LEPROS AND SEX** respectively (don't die gun-toting lepers were operable "monsters" of the final title, a strange wrestling/western hybrid).

Also from the horror house opens stable (noted a normal vampire picture Juan J. Ortega's elusive **LOS MURCIÉLAGOS: THE BATS** (1964) which saw its 1965 release in Mother Country Spain as **LOS VAMPIROS DEL OESTE: THE VAMPIRES OF THE WEST**). This was a shock monster western whose villainous protagonists wore the degues of supernatural vampires. Still more exotic (literal and figurative) vampires showed up in **CHANCOS VS. EL TIGRE Y EL VAMPIRO: CHANCOS VS. THE TIGER AND THE VAMPIRE** (1971) and **CHANCOS Y EL HAGO DEL SANTO CONTRA LOS VAMPIROS: CHANCOS AND THE SON OF SANTO VS. THE VAMPIRES** (D. Rafael Pérez Gónzalez, 1967). Chanco (usually played by beefy Oregono Casals, a veteran of several Santo films) was a popular Mexican creation who found his way into a short-lived series of poverty row "action adventures." Monster content was minimal, although in **CHANCOS VS. LOS DEVORADORES DE HOMINOS: CHANCOS VS. THE MANEATERS** (aka **CHANCOS EN LAS GARRAS DE LAS FIERAS: CHANCOS IN THE WILD BEASTS' CLAWS** D. Gilberto Martínez Solares, 1971) our hero was seen to battle the latest, most feared inflatable vinyl "giant octopus" of all time! While on the topic of lamently phoney monsters, along with vampires and octopi, it should be mentioned that a bogus "gillman" played a fairly set naming in Rafael Gálvez's **EL FANTOMA DE LAS ANIMAS: THE SWAMP OF THE LOST MONSTER**.



Rare Spanish release ad mat for the Mexican horror-western, **LOS MURCIÉLAGOS**.

(1966, US release 1968) This was another mutant western, employing a SMOBY DOO plot structure that ends with its poison powder being unveiled as a hoax engineered by a greedy villain.

At least there was an honest-to-goodness vampire in **EL IMPERIO DE DRACULA: THE EMPIRE OF DRACULA** (J. Federico Curiel, 1966) a nicely-made colour film with many stylistic similarities to Hammer's **DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS** (1965), which was something of a box-office success in Mexico. A decade or so later the prolific Alfredo B. Cavenes similarly infects **LA DINASTIA DRACULA: THE DRACULA DYNASTY** (1978) helped contribute to popularity on the late 70s resurgence of post-Hammer vampire romances. **DINASTIA** sure as hell beats John Boorman's **DRACULA** hands down, and it's dense, intense mood is not surprising in light of the other vampire mood-pieces discussed heretofore. What is surprising is the fact that former US teen heart-throb Fabiano "Fabian" Forte fills the role of a descendant of Count Dracula — and, it's not a comedy!

LOS ZOMBIES

WALKING CORPSES & HUMAN AUTOMATONS

A prototypical example of a "zombie" from the Golden Era of Meli is the dehydrated reanimated fanatic (Antonio Raso) who claws his way from his shallow grave amidst a thunderstorm in the pseudo-cerebral **MISTERIOS DE ULTRATUMBA: BLACK PIT OF DR. M** (J. Fernando Mendiz, 1956). The "zombie" of the walking dead man prefigures the cloning spreading corpses in such better known, grrro productions as **PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES** (1966), **COUNT YORGA, VAMPIRE** (1971) and **RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD** (1985).

Science sensibly aligned with voodoo brought the radio-controlled human robots of **SANTO CONTRA LOS ZOMBIES/INVASION OF THE ZOMBIES** (1961) to '64'. Still another syncretic collaboration between the occult/alchemical sciences and the technology-endowed unnatural mobil-



U.S. ad-na! for MISTERIOS DE ULTRATUMBA

ity to the heavily eye shadowed automaton slaves of **EL DR. SATAN: DR. SATAN** (J. Miguel Morayta, 1966) and their sleek mini-skirted zombie sisters in the sequel: **DR. SATAN Y LA MAGIANEGRAY: DR. SATAN Y LOS BLACKMAGIC** (J. Rogelio A. González Jr., 1967). Both films also featured cameo by a trans-oriental-winged-demoniac Satan, latter also highlighted the meditations of a sinister half-breed Central Occidental vampire-scorpion (Japanese/Mexican character actor Noh Murayama) just in case zombies and the Devil Himself didn't suffice.

As for the "traditional" utilization of the zombie: **SANTO CONTRA LA MAGIANEGRAY: SANTO Y LOS BLACKMAGIC** (J. Alfredo B. Cavenes, 1972) is perhaps the most faithful to the superficial pulp clichés designed to voodoo by Hollywood.

As well as actually being filmed on location in Haiti, **MAGIA NEGRA** contains lengthy peaks into authentic voodoo ceremonies, and numerous black guys riff-jogging around the island wearing realistic special-effects makeup (4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100). At one point these "evil zombies" are wasted off by Santo when he brandishes a custom-made iron of all things in their direction!

An earlier quite customary manufactured walking dead occurred in **LA MUERTE VIVIENTE/DEATH OF THE SMILE PEOPLE** (J. Juan Balboa and Jack Hill, 1968). As is by now very well documented, the film is one of the much-reviled low-budget, that an aging Boris Karloff appeared in during the late 60s stage of his career. The other film was **LA CAMARA DEL TERROR/THE FEAR CHAMBER**, which featured a prehistoric rock monster, **LA INVASION SINISTRA/THE INCREDIBLE INVASION**, and **SERENATA MACABRA/HOUSE OF EVIL** (all directed by Balboa and Hill, 1968). Actually, **LA MUERTE VIVIENTE: THE LIVING DEAD** is probably the best of the motley bunch, boasting some thick scene mood, as well as zombies against a pronounced neo-arcane undertone. Much of the latter ingredient is provided by lascivious actress/producer Yolande "Tongolele" Blontas in her sparsely-clad capacity as an evil juju priestess complete with mandatory phallic penitence constrictor. Hubba Hubba.

The closest we've yet seen a Mexican zombie entry come to resembling Romero's **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** (besides the torchbearings found in **INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES**) would have to be **BLUE DEMON/ ZOVYEM LA INVASION DE LOS MUERTOS/BLUE DEMON AND ZOVYEM THE INVASION OF THE DEAD** (J. René Cardona, 1972). Then a mysterious globular menace impregnated by cosmic rays settles in the Mexican badlands. Its radiation causes reanimation of a horde of shambling undead extras. These massed zombies proceed to chase Blue, ultimately escape-escape Prof. Zovik and defeatable Morder Herakle. Chrise Lindor around an isolated desert. Why the same radioactive menace apparently also causes two other dudes to devolve into vampire/werewolf-fanged growling bestmen is anybody's guess. Just for sanity's sake. ?

Theobvious Americanization of **INVASION DE LOS MUERTOS** was sketched by enough Mexicanists to keep my now-drowsy attention. On the other hand, one of the most modern Mexican monster films I've seen to date, **Ruben Galindo's zombie-CEMENTERIO DEL TERROR/CEMETERY OF TERROR** (1985) is a pretty sorry juxtaposition of blatant pinkie-wink components: **FRIDAY THE 13TH** and **RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD** are equally plagiarized in a sloppy made-US script that mimics both films with its copycat living dead teen-slasher and cinematic zombie party. **CEMENTERIO** provides ample testimony that the contemporary Mexican horror picture is a stinking, undead shadow of its former self, and should perhaps be moribund and conclusively led to rest.

LAS MOMIAS

THE CRUSTIER, DUSTIER WALKING DEAD

Another popular monster species within MAM is mummy. With its above mentioned cousin the vampire and the zombie (the Frankenstein monster makes only sporadic appearances) it is one of the more commonplace Mamestic horror ingredients. Mexico's built-in mummy cultural fascination with Quetzal and the Aztecli nodulists helps explain the major picture prominence of these reanimated corpses. Evidence of the Mexican people's collective infatuation with the mechanics of Death is provided by such exotic native societies as the Aztecs, Toltecs, and Mayans, who were known to mummify important personages and entomb them for



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all Eternity made huge, multi-tiered stone pyramids. Parallel with the more familiar ancient Egyptian tradition are quite obvious. But, whereas Hollywood and elsewhere took to the idea of mummified Egyptian pharaohs or high priests returning from the grave for revenge or vengeance, the uniquely Mexican species of mummies has maintained a considerably more subdued profile.

Probably the highest visibility Mummy-mummy character is Popoca, the aptly-named "Aztec Mummy." Popoca initially gained prominence in a three-film series directed by Rafael Portillo: *LA MOMIA AZTECA*, *LA MALDICIÓN DE LA MOMIA AZTECA* and *EL ROBOT HUMANO* (all 1957). All three films were re-edited/repurposed to various degrees for US release as *THE CURSE OF THE AZTEC MUMMY*, *ATTACK OF THE MAYAN MUMMY* and *THE ROBOT VS. THE AZTEC MUMMY*. Incidentally, the human robot, Popoca's clerical opponent in the final machine, was subsequently re-used (as *LA FORBIDDEN PLANET*/"Robby") for appearances in both *CAPERUCITA Y PULGARITO CONTRA LOS MONSTRUOS* and *LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD AND THE MONSTERS* and *LA HAYE DE LOS MONSTRUOS*/"THE SHIP OF THE MONSTERS" (both 1962).

The scruffy Aztec mummy meanwhile rose again to face voluptuous grappling champion Lorena Velázquez and Elizabeth Campbell in René Cardona's *THE WRESTLING WOMEN VS. THE AZTEC MUMMY* and even put in a belated comeback cameo alongside Velázquez and champion Johnny Legend in the Mummy-entitled film episode of Jonathan Ross' BFI tv series, *SON OF THE INCREDIBLE & STRANGE FILM SHOW* (1989). Similar crusty mummy-combos arose for *MYSTERIOS DE LA MAGIA NEGRA*/"MYSTERIES OF BLACK MAGIC" (J. Miguel M. Delgado 1957) and *SANTO EN LA VENGANZA DE LA MOMIA*/"SANTO IN THE MUMMY'S REVENGE" (J. René Cardona 1970).

Mexico's other indigenous mummy species made its welcome motion picture debut in 1910 for Federico Gamet's *LAS MOMIAS DE GUANAJUATO*/"THE MUMMIES OF GUANAJUATO". Among the real life Mexican town of Guanajuato's top tourist attractions are its museum exhibits of "real life" mummies. These withered cadavers—stoppped and stiffened by rigor mortis into grotesque simulacra of living human postures—were preserved after interment by some mysterious and apparently random process of natural mummification, possibly via some remarkable chemical reaction of the soil. The embalmed corpses are donated by loved ones to be dug up when the time is "ripe" for display among the decorated ranks of other Mummies of Guanajuato.

LAS MOMIAS DE GUANAJUATO (the showcased wrestling mega-star Blue Demon and M. Mascarán [with El Santo] contributing a bit part) plus a horde of these mummies rampaging through authentic hometown locations. The film spawned a pair of sequels, *EL ROBO DE LAS MOMIAS DE GUANAJUATO*/"THE THEFT OF THE MUMMIES OF GUANAJUATO" and *EL CASTILLO DE LAS MOMIAS DE GUANAJUATO*/"THE CASTLE OF THE MUMMIES OF GUANAJUATO" (both D. Tito Novaro, 1972). Such simulations

no doubt occurred on account of the ongoing series entry being the highest-grossing monster-wrecking flick to date. Seeing as these films simply aren't produced anymore (but recent "art film" homages like José Balsa's incredible *LA LEYENDA DE UNA MASCARÁN*/"THE LEGEND OF A MASK" 1990) likewise *LAS MOMIAS DE GUANAJUATO* still retain its enviable life.

Due to *MOMIAS* #1's success, it inevitably had its imitators and contenders. Alfredo Zacarias' *CAPULINA CONTRA LAS MOMIAS*/"CAPULINA VS. THE MUMMIES" (aka *EL TERROR DE GUANAJUATO* or *CAPULINA ENTRE LAS MOMIAS*/"CAPULINA AMONGST THE MUMMIES" 1972) was a periodic screwball mum-com that headlined its title pugilist comedia (aka Gaspar Henareque). Zacarias later created the genuine Guanajuato museum mummies in his "dissected hand" film *MACABRO*/"LA MANO DEL DUARLO" aka *DE MONDO* (200).

LAS MOMIAS DE SAN ÁNGEL/"THE MUMMIES OF SAN ÁNGEL" (J. Arturo Martínez 1972) was another stimulation of the first *GUANAJUATO* formula. The real-life town of San Ángel boasts its own more modest collection of "mummies." As with similar victims of Mt. Vesuvius' eruption in ancient Pompeii, several San Ángel people and ruins were despoiled centuries ago by a flash flood of volcanic lava. The horror fact seems to be the basic source of the film's plot and was even spun by *LAS MOMIAS DE SAN ÁNGEL*, a scripter's who took many liberties with the truth. Granted, it had some positive points in returning star M. Mascarán, heroine Lorena Velázquez and a poorly contingent of mummies. But it never attains the manic, tacky gusto and surreal brilliance of its inspiration source.

Modest mummies (of the more traditional bandage-bound Hollywood kind) walked in numerous films. Was *EL CASTILLO DE LOS MONSTRUOS*/"THE CASTLE OF THE MONSTERS" (J. Julio Soler 1967) *SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA LOS MONSTRUOS*/"SANTO AND BLUE DEMON VS. THE MONSTERS" (J. Gustavo Martínez Sotelo 1968) and *LA MANSIÓN DE LAS SIETE MOMIAS*/"THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN MUMMIES" (J. Rafael Lanza 1975) in the mid-to-late '70s mummies' techy pro wrestler pan time actor Tinobias "Darkness" in sleight-of-trick wrap-ups; belted a bullethip-cracking Zorro impersonator (film actor star Juan Irujo) in Angel Rodríguez's *EL LUTIGO CONTRA LAS MOMIAS ASESINAS*/"THE NEW P.V.S. THE MURDERING MUMMIES". A plot thread connection to the first *GUANAJUATO* film is apparent in that the title mummies are able to appear or vanish instantaneously and so doubly confound their stunned victims. Unfortunately, the mummies in this film are far too lightly wound and emaciated in appearance and provide pangs of nostalgia for the sloppier dress series of old Popoca of yore.

In more recent times, the Mummy-mummy—like most of his late, lamented monster comrades—seems to have been permanently laid to rest thanks to a now-naguable domestic film industry.

LOS HOMBRES LOBOS & LAS LOBAS

Werewolves and She-Wolves



Attack of Los Lobos from
(top) *SANTO CONTRA LAS LOBAS* and
(above) *EL HOMBRE Y EL MONSTRUO*.



lycanthropy and shapeshifting (including the related Jekyll/Hyde syndrome) were once mainstays of the low-budget horror industry. Though most film with a pronounced lycanthropic theme was heavily influenced by Lon Chaney Jr.'s Lawrence Talbot persona film popularized by Universal's **THE WOLFMAN** (1941), Chaney didn't really have a comparable counterpart in Mexico. Things came full circle of sorts when Los ventured south of the border to appear in a (non-speaking) lycanthropic role for the Gamán Tin Tan Video comedy **LA CASA DEL TERROR** (1988). **THE HOUSE OF TERROR** (D. Gilberto Martínez Solares, 1988). As is by now common knowledge, a butchered, English-dubbed and high unwatchable version with additional US shot footage was released in 1986 by notorious hack group Jerry 'I deploy nothing but utter contempt for the cinematic medium' Warren. Known as **FACE OF THE SCREAMING WEREWOLF**, it may easily join Warren's other laughably infatuated import Max/US greif-ops: **ATTACK OF THE MAYAN MUMMY CREATURE**, **THE WALKING DEAD** and **CURSE OF THE STONE HAND** as one of the crudest repackaging non-attempts ever.

Thankfully Warren didn't get to inflict his disastrous anti-Mexican touch on **EL HOMBRE Y EL MONSTRUO: THE MAN AND THE MONSTER** (D. Rafael Baleón 1957), starring super Mexican horror hero/producer Abel Salazar in his pre-**SPAINAC** days. **HOMBRE** owed as much to Robert L. Stevenson as to Larry S. Talbot, with its tale of a haunted priest (Enrique Rentería) reverting to evil. Hyde-like werewolf became when a certain composition played on his keyboard. Sordid in its make-it-sander tale even more so is a dark Faustian sub-plot about a soul sold in fulfillment of a glorious musical career... and also murder. The serious mood is not undone even by comical makeup (the fully transformed

monster boasts a prominent schnozz with the general dimensions of a proboscis monkey's). Director (and actor) Baleón rose from helming featureless US-imitative Mexican westerns and the like to become one of Mexico's finest purveyors of monster/horror/fantasy fare in the later '50s to mid-'60s period. Now in his early seventies, Baleón currently acts in daytime Spanish-language soap operas.

The other notable Baleónian werewolf entry was **LA LOBA Y THE SHE-WOLF** (1964), which co-starred Joaquín Cordero and an inordinate amount of graphic splatter for the period (perhaps the antithesis of Baleón's whimsical Tin Tan comedy musical from the same year: **LOS FANTASMAS BURLONES: THE GHOST JOKERS**). **LA LOBA** reveals the exploits of a ferocious, white-furred wolf heroine (Fóly de Hoyos) and again was slightly marred by occasionally laughable monster makeups (a "werewolf" that look more like fuzzy slippers). All in all though a worthy effort.

Other wolf-chicks based their talents and work spongy fur blime in the unrelated **SANTO CONTRA LAS LOBAS: SANTO VS. THE SHE WOLVES** (D. Jaime Jiménez Pons & Rubén Galindo 1972), **LAS LOBAS DEL RING: THE SHE WOLVES OF THE RING** (D. René Cantón 1964) were figurative rather than literal (a fierce but fully human all-girl wrestling team — part of the Warring Women series).

While [well]woman roared, male lycanthropes appeared in the likes of **SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA DRACULA Y EL HOMBRE LOBO: SANTO AND BLUE DEMON VS. DRACULA AND THE WOLFMAN** (D. Miguel M. Galardo, 1972), **EL HOMBRE Y LA BESTIA: THE MAN AND THE BEAST** (1972 — a version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde) and **PEPITO Y CHABELO VS. LOS MONSTRUOS: PEPITO**

AND CHABELO VS. THE MONSTERS (1972). Wolfman also had supporting parts in the late **SANTO EN EL MUSEO DE CERÁ: SAMSON IN THE WAX MUSEUM** (D. Alfonso Corona Blake, 1963) and **EL DEMONIO AZUL: BLUE DEMON** (D. Cheno Urzúa, 1964).

As for the latterday lycanthropy scene (what there is of it), the best we can do is **CAZADOR DE DEMONIOS/DEMON HUNTER** (D. Gilberto de Anda 1985). Although the monster is not actually called a werewolf in the film (which has been English-dubbed and released to M. American video as *erant* in modern-day Meaplatzton), the plot essentially follows the typical werewolf blueprint. It depicts the murderous rampage of a blooded demon from Indian lore, but you might as well classify the sporadically glimpsed lupine/ursine monster as a *werewolf*. **DEMON HUNTER** is far from remarkable, but it is a rare competent milestone in the now pitifully barren Mexican monster landscape.

LOS MONSTRUOS PREHISTORICOS, ETC.

DINOSAURS, BATMEN, & EVEN A YETI
No doubt because the nation does not possess atomic technology, Mexico's 50s monsterfests never reflected the same paranoid nuclear concerns of US-made sci-fi film from the period. The closest Mexico really came to a bonafide trans-montar-on-the-run page-flick was **THE BLACK SCORPION** (1957), a Hollywood production lensed south of the border. Of course, the US-Mex coproduction, **EL MONSTRUO DE LA MONTAÑA NUEVA: BEAST OF HOLLOW MOUNTAIN** (aka **LA BESTIA DE LA MONTANA**





The stony-eyed bat monster comes off Ana Luisa in Alfredo B. Cevallos's *AVENTURA AL CENTRO DE LA TIERRA*.

Y *THE BEAST OF THE MOUNTAIN* (D. Edward Hirsch; 1954/56) showcased some possible Willie O'Brien-designed sf/aural domination. But, this was merely your routine cat spars, initiated in its final minutes by a spot of diverting dinosaur action.

Speaking of dinosaurs: *LA EDADE DE PIEDRA: THE STONE AGE* (D. René Cardona 1962) was a comedy starring popular Mexican funnyman Capulina and Miro. It contained some gaudy-toe-bait footage that later saw recycling along with additional stock shots from *ONE MILLION B.C.* (U.S. 1940) and *UNKNOWN ISLAND* (U.S. 1947) in order to pad out the running time of *AVENTURA AL CENTRO DE LA TIERRA*. *ADVENTURE AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* (D. Alfredo B. Cevallos 1964) Essentially a loose remake of *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* (U.S. 1908) the Mex version — in addition to being mercifully much shorter — actually emerges as a substantially more entertaining film. This in spite of a lack of the Technicolor and CinemaScope of its forerunner. Of course, it also lacked insufferable smeghead Pat Boone, which helps explain everything. Location work done in real Mexican volcanic caverns, a cyclopean prehistoric lizard monster, as well as a bipolar bar humanoid with amorous aims on sexy heroine Ana Luisa Peluffo are only three reasons why *AVENTURA* remains one of my personal faves in all-out Mesoamerican.

Borrowed stock footage from *ONE MILLION B.C.* also surfaced in *LA ISLA DE LOS DINOSAURIOS: THE ISLAND OF THE DINOSAURS* (D. Rafael Portillo 1966). This was a Mex/US coproduction with Hal Roach Studios (producers of the 1940 *ONE MILLION B.C.*), which meant they actually had permission to re-edit the older footage. *ISLAND* was shot in glorious b/w (yet so it could more conveniently accommodate a colorized look). The film is roughly seventy percent (?) vintage footage mixed with crudely matched newly-shot scenes. These (most 1966 Mex principals Armando Silvestre and Alma Delia Fuentes into 1940 action-wearing lookalike costumes (and obviously outdated hairstyles) to better match up with original US stars Victor Mature and Carole Landis. It's surprising on account of the effort expenditure required to pull off the less-than-flawless "illusion" that the Mex dubbing didn't just merely re-dub and replace Roach's original film instead.

What's more is the hacked-together hackjob of sampled footage and re-edited-in-line was basically a quickie cash-in on the then-current Raquel Welch/Harvey K. *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* — which in turn was a remake of the very film from which *ISLAND* derived its pasted-in footage! Jerry Warren, act your heart out. Pure bar, I suppose. Jerry bulber Warren costarized several perfectly adequate Mex/monster films for US consumption (and immediate nauseous repugnation) including *ISLAND* director Rafael Portillo even earlier *Atacá Munchy* too. So, I guess Rafael tested sweet revenge, and we gungo bastards got a taste of our own medicine.

In addition to dinosaurs and belpas, in the same period Mexico went a-hunting down the well-trod Abominable Snowman trail. This resulted in *EL MONSTRUO DE LAS VOLCANES: THE VOLCANO MONSTER* (aka *EL HOMBRE DE LAS NIEVES: THE SNOWMAN*) (D. Jaime Salvador 1962) and *EL TERRIBLE GIGANTE DE LAS NIEVES: THE TERRIBLE SNOW GIANT*

(aka *EL FANTASMA DE LAS GRUTAS: THE GHOST OF THE CAVES* and *EL FANTASMA DE LAS NIEVES: THE GHOST OF THE SNOW*) (D. Jaime Salvador 1962). The monster here was a towering and impressive-looking (at least according to this) white cotton-puffball apeman. I hope to live long enough to see either or both of these incredibly obscure films (editor's note: in fact, the second movie, although a sequel to the first one, does not feature a real monster, but a human impostor as the snowman).

Both stellar commonplace Mex/plotation face Joseph Cordero, whose roles were divided fairly evenly between heavies and heroes. Cordero can be seen in both *DR. SATAN* films, as well as others covered by this shade. His latest Mifflid appearance is one in *PESADILLA SANGRIENTAY BLOODY NIGHTMARE* (D. Pedro Salazar II, 1995). This is a cheap monster-filler, a loose sequel to the generic daily film *VACACIONES DE TERROR: TERROR VACATION* (D. René Cardona II 1968). *PESADILLA* also concerns a possessed girl's doll, which here forms into a billy-demon and boasts of mostly *GNOMIES*-level spiff and pronounced Americanization, but no nice to see Cordero still at it. He appears remarkably well-preserved, almost physically unchanged since his halcyon days as the daft-garbed wax sculptor in *Elleedon's* moody *MUSEO DEL HORROR* (1964). Cordero often bears a strong resemblance to a younger Cameron Mitchell, which seems highly appropriate considering his longevity in the Mex/plotation neo-wave industry.

LOS MONSTRUOS CÓMICOS

GOOFS AND SPOOFS

A standard "tongue-in-Mex/monster" film can often yield its quota of off-the-wall moments. When a Mex/monster film decides to lampoon itself or the genre, prepare for ever more zany and unpredictable results! Perhaps an apex within the spoof sub-genre was reached in *AUTOPSIA DE UN FANTASMA: AUTOPSY OF A GHOST* (D. Juan Rodríguez 1967). Tearing up Basil Rathbone, John Carradine and Cameron Mitchell, the film is probably the craziest and most anarchic in structure, with its living skeleton



female android and various phony gangs on. Epitomizing AUTOPSY's infectious dementia are loopy coded sequences as populated by assorted witches, spectres and goblins rendered as frantic maniacs. These are accompanied by a theme instrumental that's a frenetic Tia Marí approximation of Sam the Sham, with repeated vocal utterances peevishly provided by the Cheparróns on guitar!

Another favorite: **LOCURA DE TERROR/ Y TERROR MADNESS** (D. Julien Soler, 1965) is a spoofish Tin Tan opus that includes lumpy-faced henchmen — allegedly zombies? — and a duo of mad scientists working in a laboratory when they resort through outcrazy-looking monsters, army-mating people (locally) into puddles of goop using their electrical machinery. Before his death in 1973, Tin Tan (real name Germán Valdés, brother to other Mexicanos Ramon and Manuel Loco Valdés) made probably more horror-based comedies than any other time comic. Mexican or otherwise, his screwy repertoire includes **EL FANTASMA DE LA OPERETTA/ THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERETTA** (D. Fernando Cortés, 1958) wherein he encountered a spectral, disguised killer, and the above-mentioned **LA CASA DEL TERROR** (1968). Tin Tan concluded his formerly illustrious career (his domestic fame rivaled that of Mario Casasola/Morro) not self-adequating for the movie-bound partygoer like here in **EL INCREÍBLE PROFESOR ZÓNEK**, and lighting a feeble blow-up cephalopod in the shtetynal **CHANCOS VS. LOS DE VOYAJADORES DE HOMBRES/ Y CHANCOS VS. THE MANGSTERS** (D. Osiberto Martínez Solares, 1971).

Cineclásico Antonio Espino, another popular clown the costarred with Tin Tan in **LOS FANTASMAS BURLONES/ Y THE GHOST JOKERS** (D. Rafael Baldeón, 1964) also frequently spoofed schools, some even centering monsters. **EL CASTILLO DE LOS MONSTRUOS/ THE CASTLE OF THE MONSTERS** (D. Julien Soler, 1967) is undoubtedly his most-monster film in a mummy, a woman (port of) a rubbered gillman ("Beasta de la Laguna Seca/ Beast from the Dried Up Lagoon"), a bell-necked Frankensteinian creature (called "Frankenstein") as well as a vampire-called "El Murgallago." The Bar (**EL VAMPIRO**) is Germán Roldán doing an in-joke (at part) that receives ample screentime. CASTILLO is, primarily a copycat of the Abbott and Costello formula pioneered in **MEET FRANKENSTEIN**.

Another Cineclásico film took a total panster from **ACOO TO MARS**. Cineclásico took cinematic step for Marsland and a giant step for stupidity in the comensually odd extraterrestrial excursion **EL CONQUISTADOR DE LA LUNA/ THE CONQUEROR OF THE MOON** (D. Rogelio A. González, 1962). Here the total-farud comedian-mad scientist monsters transplanted onto Earth's satellite. His relationship arrives there via a large amount of transplanted stock footage from **DESTINATION MOON**. The Moonman theme was an earlier standard-nepenthe hamboresc with multiple stars, but the Great Martian Brain is something else entirely. It features a huge aqueduct, fountain-giggle of Telly Telly, join from its caravans attended by drooping giant eyeballs on stilts that bring to mind the Phenaxer with their working fireworks in **FLESH GORDON** as they were suggestively over helpless to live interest Ana Luta Páez. **CONQUISTADOR** is one wretched experience, and should only have originated in Mexico, muchacho!

Also directed by Rogelio González was **LA HIVE DE LOS MONSTRUOS**, which explored movie subliminal's f. latest territory. As well as Amazonian alienates Lorena Velázquez and Ana Bertha Lape decked out in revealing tribal Futurist fashions, the go-go! Tin could boast a several strongly conceived BEHMs and the re-used spaceman suit from **THE ROBOT VS. THE AZTEC MUMMY**. An eye-catching blend of alluring space costumes, latex monsters, laughs and musical numbers (the latter two departments covered by singing Tito Lalo Páez/González). The film is a must-see of Mexican Mexican chintziness.

Further related comedies are **PERIPO Y CHAREL VS. LOS MONSTRUOS** (1973) which included the genre of mandatory bachelors, vampire, mummy and gill-creature-and-juice. Long running Max Luvier/Mar Gaspar/Capulina Henares, as well as starring with El Santo and facing killer doppleganger robots in **SANTO CONTRA CAPULINA** (1968). In addition made bids in the life-size-monster stakes was **CAPULINA CONTRA LAS MOMIAS AND MONSTRAS CONTRA LOS MONSTRUOS** (both 1973).

Along even earlier lines were life-size juvenile-oriented "fantasyland" adventures. Without doubt the fullest and most principal in the colorful sub-genre is **LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD AND THE MONSTERS**. This was the only real monster-out-angry in an otherwise-cute and innocuous four film saga. **MONSTRUOS** dealt with youthful fantasy heroes Little Red aka Caparvota and Tom (Thurs) aka Pulgarito played by child stars Cecilia and Cesarito Quetzalcoatl) combating the sinister Witch Queen aka Reina (Rita Olafía Quintana). The screenplay is a live-action-dance-mag for the kids' world of **SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS**. The green-faced witch/goblin (who radiates an impenetrable aura) and the characters that was probably not to kiddie audience) contribute an extensive army of Hanz EF monsters. These include the omnipresent anatomic bloodsucker (**El Señor Vampiro**), played by Max supporting player Osmir Buitrago, a Frankensteinian monster look-alike, even an incoherent midget dragon, as well as sundry less readily identifiable demons. The film is oriented to the kids with its in its outrageous and colorful characters — including José Díaz Moreno as the burlly **El Ojo**/The Ogre and Tin Tan (as Loco Valdés) as **El Lobo Feroz**/The Big Bad Wolf — but that cataloging them all here would be pointless.



Nowadays, the MMM comedy scene is dominated by the likes of **MATERNAL PORQUE ME MUERO** (D. Abraham Chazem, 1990). The admittedly atmospheric film clearly only provides a forum for the doofus muggings of its amiable star comic duo: Pedro Chetanga Weber and Raúl Chetanga Padilla. It's essentially a haunted house spook spoof containing two seductive ghostwives. These horny soccer-bus spirit into vinegill/virten (socio)ghosts for the last few minutes of the picture (zombie makeup is fittingly courtesy of "Necrosis"). Though the monster stuff herein is a long time in coming and reasoned sparingly, it is played sufficiently creepy and straight, including some actual graphic splatter. This seems to bode favourably — however infrequently — for the future of what's up for rent at your neighbourhood video centre.

There seem to be more monsters gradually creeping back into the current M movie scene what with **MATERNAL PORQUE ME MUERO**, **PEÑADILLA SANGRIENTIA/ BLOODY NIGHTMARE** and **AL FILO DEL TERROR/ AT THE EDGE OF TERROR** (1990). The lattermost also concerns the demonic activities of killer madmen. While seemingly inspired by **MUNECOS INFERNALES/CURSE OF THE DOLL PEOPLE** (D. Benito Alazraki, 1987) by way of Charles Band/Fall Moon's **PUPPETMASTER** series and **KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE**, **AL FILO DEL TERROR** marks a welcome return to the MMM directional fold for erstwhile Mexploitationeer Alfredo B. Cevallos. (He of the great fun **AVENTURA AL CENTRO DE LA TIERRA**.) With René Cardona dead, René Cardona Jr. seemingly stuck in a semi-comatose rut, and Rafael Galindo consigned in semi retirement to acting in bootleg soap operas, perhaps it'll be left to Ted time Cevallos to carry the torch in a welcome '90s renaissance of Mexploitation movies. We can all only hope. El Santo's eternal Silver Mask will crack a smile from beyond the grave, and He'll be ready for 'em.

By Bernadette Montiel



KISS ME, MONSTER!

THE CREATURE FEATURES OF JESUS FRANCO

BY TIMOTHY PAXTON WITH DAVID TODARELLO

There are countless instances when a director has his or her work clearly misunderstood. Undertakings of surrealistic wonder are often criticized by those who don't comprehend, and labeled "so bad it's good," a monster which sadly is all too often attached to the works of Jesus (Jesus) Franco. Like so many other Euro-directors of genre films, Franco is habitually feared as the master of shock or rubbish. When a video of his is rented, borrowed, loaned or bought, much of the audience seems to be assaulted with all sorts of male macho, predominantly sadomasochistic sex play. Regardless, those diligent enough to explore beyond the brutal and zoom-crazy camera skills of the Spaniard will discover that he indeed has a vision—often a strange and silly one.

Following an unusual filmmaking different from his fellow countryman Paul Naschy, Jesus Franco discards the conventional affinity for the traditional Universal style monsters to fuel his carnal creativity. He despises the work of Hammer, a Terrorist Fischer, and grows that into a creative output. Whereas Naschy populated his homages with Universal-inspired creatures like a score of *DRACULA* (*DRACULA'S GREAT LOVE* 1972), a revenge-minded mummy (*MUMMY'S REVENGE* 1973), a rough and tumble monster mash (*ASSIGNMENT TERROR* 1969)—see last issue for the review—and his ever-popular Waldemar Daninsky the Werewolf (*WEREWOLF'S SHADOW* 1970 etc.)—his love for the creature features of the 30's and 40's is very obvious. Franco fashions a world of his own. Although Naschy's characters are greater lovers (see his *Dracula* and *Werewolf* projects), they lack any real active sexual conviction. Franco, on the other hand, has very dynamic creatures which interact all the time, or with sexually active characters. These monsters are prime fodder for adult erotic horreplay. The showman play of this is the pleasure-driven sexual romances in his *LA COMTESSE AUX BIENS NUS* (1973, better known as *THE LOVES OF INNA*, and also released in a less sexually explicit but more violent version on video as *EROTICOLL*). Countess Karoline is cursed with a peroxide brand of vampirism. She is doomed to consume her lovers during agonizing acts of sin (vagrantly, orally or otherwise), and ends her life before she can kill another sinner. And in the first *THE SCREAMING DEAD* (*THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN* and *A FILLE DE DRACULA*) (none of the latter two had the former) sex plays an important role—although not a very healthy or orthodox one.

Bordering on the if Franco habitually wallows in sadistic fancy which is most banalised would have you think he is insane. In his frightful *DEMONIAC* (1976) Franco goes as far as featuring himself as the rational, blood-thirsty killer "The Seducer of Notre Dame." However, that and films such as *JACK THE RIPPER* (1977) and the usual *FACELESS* (1968), feature no true monsters and the eroticism in them is limited to carnage, sadomasochism and so forth. For a man who is so well known for his forays into carnal cinema... he renowned love of the buttocks is noted by many scholars—Franco's monster movies reflect his need to break the barrier that few directors before him had erected. There have been sex and monsters in the cinema before, but none were so widely processed and ardently manipulated as those by Franco (save the few vampire films by another ghoulish French director Jean Rollin).

Concentrating solely on three of his better-known monster movies, you may begin to understand what Franco was after. Although there are many different versions of these films around, the three regarded here are available through assorted alternative tape dealers, and should be understood as introductory projects to the man's wonderfully warped logic.

Franco's first two pseudo-monster films featured animated human corpses as automata. *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE HORRIBLE DOCTOR ORLOFF* (*AWFUL DR. ORLOFF*) (1962) and *EL SECRETO DEL DR. ORLOFF* (*LES MAÎTRESSES DU DR. ZEKYLLOR ORLOFF'S MONSTER*) (1964) were reported to feature title in the way of erotic sensations (not all of his later films were as violent, and his 1980 *COUNT DRACULA* is a good example that he can make a very dry film). Early in his career Jesus Franco made a film which stands out as possibly one of his best, *MISS MUERTE* (*DIABOLICAL DR. Z*) (1965), incorporated the super-science of brain surgery, the popular motif of the day-stay-grafting face mutilation (what *Frankenstein* from Georges Méliès 1929 *LES YEUX SANS VISAGE* *THE EYES WITHOUT A FACE* and which he and others would exploit often), and saved the stupor-clad "Miss Death" who is a womanlike being told the men who "murdered" her mistress, father. Sleazy and very entertaining—but no monster to speak of. Still, this one film would seem to be the attrition for Franco's less-ventured with the sexually bizarre. It was here that the man could have stuck to the classic genre and made "adult" films, but instead, bless him, Franco chose to expound his sick sense of the perverse much further.

Horror meets Horror in a hideous fight to the death



Canadian ad mat for *THE SCREAMING DEAD* as a double bill with Paul Naschy's *WEREWOLF'S SHADOW*. Karloff's monster (circa 1931) is featured prominently, no doubt to cash in on the nostalgia this film was to have flamed. Note of interest, Fernando Bilbao plays the monster in both *THE SCREAMING DEAD* AND *THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN*, whereas three years earlier he essayed the part for the Paul Naschy/Tullio Demicheli vehicle *ASSIGNMENT TERROR*.

THE SCREAMING DEAD

1972

Original Spanish Title: *DRÁCULA CONTRA FRANKENSTEIN*

Original French Title: *A DRACULA PRISONNIER DE FRANKENSTEIN*

Those people lucky enough to have bought or rented this video back in the early to mid 80's when companies like Lightning Video and Wizard were cranking out monthly Euro-trash releases, or can still find the creamed box of *THE SCREAMING DEAD* on their video store shelves, have access to the only film in the trilogy that was released in the U.S. *THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN* was re-released in Britain in an English form by Go Video, while *A FILLE DE DRACULA* was translated into our language and in this case is in French. At any rate, as stated before, those auspicious few who have encountered *THE SCREAMING DEAD* probably reacted as I did: I was flabbergasted. Having grown up on a heavy diet of Universal and Hammer, I was wholly unprepared to swallow the arty ambience and means no-longer anyline of the Franco's monsterfest. What must have been an incredible widescreen experience when viewed in the cinema, cloddish Franco's patient stomping camera work and ostial angles, was reduced to the non-scanned video ratio. I was supposed to say

Howard Vernon as a rather animated Dracula from **THE SCREAMING DEAD**.

the level. "Feet have gone by and I secretly surround the film with some ambition and insight, especially after witnessing **THE LOVES OF IRINA** and **MANHUNTER**. Although both of those films, and others like **COUNT DRACULA** and **THE CASE OF THE ZOMBIES**, have been scoffed off as junk [which they aren't, I feel that his French co-productions need another look and I will begin with his first copulatory production

Imagine if you will a horror film that exists within various boundaries. In one domain it is the typical monster-led "House" film with jarring gore scenes terrorizing the countryside and a mad doctor responsible for everything that is evil. In another sphere, **THE SCREAMING DEAD** presents as an exercise in surreal stopaction, where what little plot exists is twisted to pale foreboding. Possibly a cock-eyed companion would be to the works of Jean Luc Godard, in which are full of visual allegories—if you care to decipher them. Franco's first outing into monster territory is actually as visually chaotic, if not more so. Old Karlful and Lugosi fans would be advised to take note and not to criticize Franco's manipulation of their most cherished childhood memories. Not only is the first victim of Franco's film, and rightly so, as he is shaping the old to make

friend of their room. She screams. Her brother hears the cry from his room, but goes back to his work as a cobbler boss up and thunders and lightning begin. With each microscope flicker the vampire advances on his victim, driving her to the floor and biting her. Franco zooms into the gnawing assault, and with each consecutive flash of light we are just a bit closer to the bloody wound and the sucking vampire. Then, as Dracula finishes supping the image shakes and blurs as the camera jiggles and goes out of focus. The next bit of apparition reappears on behalf of the director, not only making us aware that we are watching an oddly photographed horror movie, but the shaving camera work is highly reminiscent of the hurried, care-free type of cinema verite footage typical of late night news. There is a breakdown between what was supposed to be a scene of dramatic horror and what the result is: a cheap bit of moviegoer fun. There are other such tantalizing occurrences, although they are less powerful, less scary. Unlike his indirect sequel **THE FIRST** (see page 17), **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN** is linear, without the disturbing time-travel elements from the first film (such as a car-bait pulling up to a castle along side a horse-drawn carriage, a jockey in a leviathan, etc.). **RITES** is practically a mainstream work, even more so than the first chapter in this trilogy, **LA FILLE DE DRACULA**, while Franco's **THE SCREAMING DEAD** films, with nearly Franco's hands-on as a director who could have been a great movie and shaker—that is, if he cared.

The crazed Dr. Frankenstein (Dennis Price) serves a blue-faced Dracula (Howard Vernon) doing his best to bring a new dimension to the vampire's persona: that of a wooden faced, mostly inactive corpse to help in the restoration of his already completed, man-made monster. Along the way Dr. Seward (Alberto Delfino) occupies himself with various plots in which he can eliminate Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, and his heart of horrific female attendants. Along the way Seward is disturbed by a revitalized monster (under the control of Dracula via threats by Frankenstein) and is brought back from the brink of death by a band of gypsies. One of the gypsies is a werewolf who assists Seward in eliminating the monster while Frankenstein double-crosses Dracula and destroys him and his bride (Britt Nichols). However, before the director's shadow can pour between the two comic-book parts, Frankenstein manages to slip away from Seward and escapes.

Very little in this modern-day (") monster rally is very erotic, although there are scenes which border on the sexually deviant. In an early sequence Frankenstein uphorns the blood of young virgin (Anna Lili) into a chemical vat containing a live bat. After draining the poor woman of her life and in the process, reviving Dracula, the cackling Price instructs his manservant to eliminate the body. Of course, with a still fresh female now available to him, his assistant greedily makes it before popping the corpse into the cauldron's furnace. Other scenes only hint at what could have been a delicious romp

through the protean. Apparently overseas prints do contain some nudity, although this has yet to be seen. However, Franco was going to hold us in ragged attention for only a few months as he reached his sequel.

THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN

1972

Original Spanish Title: **LA MALDICIÓN DE FRANKENSTEIN**Original French Title: **LES EXPÉRIENCES ÉROTIQUES DE FRANKENSTEIN**

Dr. Frankenstein returns for another round of monster making in Franco's sequel **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN**. Totally ignoring the mad-up time frame in which the first film was set, we are in an era of horse-drawn carriages and a mysterious cult based over by a madman with supernatural powers. Franco tossed aside *sex positivity*, making this movie a piggyback of sorts. If you remember, in **THE SCREAMING DEAD** Dr. Frankenstein and his monster were joined depending on what time zone you're in, to Dr. Seward, a man who wanted to see the world of monsters. This time around Franco's movie all jolts up everything and plants his characters down someone around 1990. Despite this sudden jerk of temporal poses and a madman for those who had seen the first film and who cared something about the plot, Franco has come up with a very linear film—a far cry from **THE SCREAMING DEAD**. Its as if Seward and Frankenstein were eternal protagonists destined to confront each other throughout space and time. However, I really doubt the director had anything as bold and mystical as that in mind when he made **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN**. Franco, no doubt bored with working in the 30th Century, probably wanted to see the Frankenstein monster in as many bizarre scenarios as possible. And use him he did. There is one particularly bizarre scene where the monster is being used as an infomercial shopping machine. The creature is being used as his body made-up with silver grease paint and sporting a tuxedo (quasi-Universal Frankenstein monster blood head) as seen beating two naked women with gleeful ferocity. Disturbing but in a way very neatly done. Utilizing what he has available he gathered up his repertoire, rented the same castle he did for the first film, and spent a fraction more on the make-up for the monster. Surprisingly the film is pretty good and for Franco, loves it, it is full of bizarre characters and respectable images. Where else would you have a crazed, blind, half human (bird woman) who screams like a gull and hangs for human flesh, and the Frankenstein monster resurrected just to torture innocents and mate with a newly created sex-creature? Attracting staff!

During a bold, brain-drilling experiment to give his monster the gift of speech, Dr. Baron Frankenstein (again played by Dennis Price) has his operation interrupted by the appearance of the odd blue-bearded and capped version of the mutant bird woman Melissae (Anna Lili) aka Joanne Gilbert and her manservant (Luis Barbao) who played the servant of Frankenstein in the first film. The bird creature attacks Frankenstein, savagely mauling the scientist. The doctors' gypsy-hair, mouthed assistant (Franco himself in cameo) attempts to go for help, but he receives a fatal blow as well knifed in the gut by Melissae's chauffeur. With Frankenstein on the floor bleeding from his wounds, Melissae cowers the monster (actor Fernando Delgado) who is as cruel as his father (Howard Vernon) and has a shopped to the castle alone of her master, the mysterious and sure mad Capricorn (Howard Vernon). Capricorn's abhors humanity and has obvious plans of creating a super race with the aid of the Frankenstein monster and a female creature the mystic has in the works.

Dr. Jonathan Seward, the new one again played by Alberto Delfino, "man of science and physician of Frankenstein's work, discovers the body of his girl, on the examination table it is

Britt Nichols as the bride of Dracula in Franco's **THE SCREAMING DEAD**.

office. The tom and bleeding Frankenstein tries to tell Seward about his assistants, but expires before anything useful can be passed on. Mystified about the death, Seward attends the burial of his old and then introduces himself to Vera Frankenstein (Tina Nichols), the Baron's daughter and noted scientist in her own right. She snubs the man and later that night unwraps the coffin of her father. With the help of her female assistant (Barbara Savon), she successfully reanimates her father's corpse by using the experimental "deep incision ray." After congratulatory remarks from the undead Baron, he relays to his daughter the whereabouts of his monster and insists that she re-enact his murder and retrieve his creation. The Baron spatters and perishes again. Vera and her servant set off to Capogreco's castle.

The film is a full of warring ideologies of insanity from here on in, and the best sequence pop up when you least expect them. Capogreco kidnaps various women and has them dismembered and their reassembled into one "perfect woman" for the Frankenstein monster to mate with. In a delightfully creepy sequence the mad mystic calls upon his rejected experiments: those perful and skeletal creatures he created while dabbling in the alchemical art of bringing life to dead tissue, to be at his side while he announces his plans of using the Frankenstein monster with his female fabrication. These ghouls (many just actors in sheets with rubber or paper maché masks, while others are just classroom skeletons with sheets attached to their) shuffle through the dark bowels of Capogreco's castle and gaze at their master as he instructs his handmaiden to behold women and so forth. Despite the shoestring budget that Rianso had to work with, even these scenes correspond well within the fantastic framework he has set up. Capogreco himself is a wonderful conglomerate of those Gothic actors and madmen who populated various 19th Century horror stories. His dabbling in human semen and animal tissue resulted in the creation of Melissa, the man's half human/half bird daughter, and his history of being a 400-year-old magician reincarnated over and over adds to the film's whimsical air.

The film kicks into high gear when Seward utilizes the "deep incision ray" to reanimate Baron Frankenstein to get more information out of him. The Baron burts to life once again, warns Seward not to interfere with his plans, then resumes being a corpse. As the desecrated scientist turns his back, the Baron returns from the dead on his own and attacks him! Luckily, Seward's manservant is there to douse the zombie with sulfuric acid, thus rendering the reanimated corpse headless! When Vera's servant is discovered alive though traumatized after being attacked by Melissa, she is hypnotized by Seward and reveals that her mistress was kidnapped by Capogreco. Pushing an envelope he and his aide-de-camp head toward the castle.

Meanwhile, Capogreco plays with Vera, breaking down her will by stripping her naked and having her bound with one of the mystic's unorthodox and equally exposed manservant. The two are placed on a bed of poisoned blades, with just enough foot room to stand without being impaled by the deadly daggers. If that isn't enough, Capogreco awakens his animal magnetism and using Melissa as a focal point, orders the Frankenstein monster to whip the two undodged captives! The scene goes on for an uncomfortable three or four minutes of screaming victims, snapping whips, a bellowing monster, and the crazed laughter/bird screeching of the doomy-blue Melissa. It's an eerie episode and one of the film's more "erotic" if taken in the world's purest definitions. (None of interest, the Spanish edition lacks any nude scene such as the one featured in the English language version. Instead of the chilly sequence of Helms and Barlow being whipped in the buff we see the actors wearing ridiculous blue underwear. Then too, where Capogreco the monster is completely nude, the actress is draped with a blue cloth. These re-shot episodes, probably for



PRICE
GALLES
VERNON
SAVON
LIBERT
NICOLS

1972
1972

Spanish Poster Art for THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN



Culinary Spanish
lobby card for Jesus
Franco's 1972
monster/horror classic,
THE SCREAMING
DEAD

delusion in prudish markets, disabes the film's true actuality and renders it rather chilly. Caddy enough, Franco created various scenes featuring Lina Romay and an old woman which weren't in the English copy (Vera survives the ordeal and a brow-beaten interdimensional by a silent Cagliostro and the cackling temptress Melissa. Unable to think for herself, Miss Frankenstein uses the "deep emotion" to animate the female monster and needs her father's opinion for the mating ritual).

Luckily for the world, the dramatic joining of the two homunculi is interrupted when Steward sneaks into the castle and makes his way into the dungeon. Just before the monster is about to consummate the "wedding" Steward cries out: "Kwenge your creator! These people killed your master!" Something clicks in the silver brutes' malformed brain and Cagliostro's spell is broken. Melissa jumps at the monster, but she is reduced to a pile of feathers and broken flesh in a matter of seconds. Frankenstein's creation goes berserk and attacks the ghoul's enclave, scattering the ready-made critics rather splatter as it tries to reach a fleeing Cagliostro. The mystic fails to elude the monster when the brute is destroyed by the screams of Vera. Poking up his master's daughter, the monster lumbers through the castle until Steward pulls a bullet in his brain. Cagliostro escapes the castle in a carriage, but goes over a cliff and plunges into the sea — laughing all the way knowing that in nine months his soul will be reincarnated once again.

Unintentionally the most complex monster film next to *THE LONESOME PHOENIX*, Franco's *EROTIC RITES* is the perfect balance between what is horrific and what is titillating. Included are scenes depicting the frightful ending of a young man chained to a dungeon wall by the squealing Melissa. The nude and feathered form of actress Lina Romay gives more organic bliss at the wedding ceremony's very disturbing. The English print of the film has copious amounts of frontal nudity (male and female) in a model posing nude for a painter and when Vera steps for her maid, as well as Franco's patented fetish "boom to the crotch" and "boom on the butt" shots. As well as those lurid sequences, the film features the director's talent for capturing the lush beauty of landscapes when he cameleopard the countryside. *EROTIC RITES* is Franco's poignant example that monsters and sex are a potent combination.

THE DAUGHTER OF DRACULA

(unofficial English Translation)

1972

Original Portuguese Title: A FILHA DE DRÁCULA

Original French Title: LA FILLE DE DRACULA

Original Spanish Title: LA HUA DE DRÁCULA

LA FILLE DE DRÁCULA is the third and final installment in Franco's trilogy of terror. As with the previous productions, the film features many of the same actors and actresses and a shot in similar location and utilizes copies of the identical sets and production stills. (Potentially less interesting and dynamic than either of its companion projects, "The Daughter of Dracula" borrows less from the original and instead Universal creature catalogue and in turn is a re-telling of the Karanzenfleschen vampire tale, a sub-genre which Franco essayed in 1970 with *YAMPTROUS LESBOGOS*. Hammer was to depict that same year with *THE YAMPTROUS LOVERS* and which Roger Vadim camped with his *ET MOURIR DE PLASINBLOGO AND ROSES* (1965). More talk and less action is the rule here, which probably makes sense when you consider that the story from



Anne Lipton: bitten and bloodied in *LA FILLE DE DRÁCULA*

which it is based (Steward's father's 1872 novel "Cemeterio") is one of rampaging monsters but of a low, slyly seductive and feather-learning vampire. Still, giving Franco the benefit of doubt, you would expect something out of the ordinary, given that, despite his clear deliriousness, he is supposedly disturbing this — although they are seemingly scattered throughout this pretty production.

As becomes a monster movie, we are witness to the brutal lashing of a young woman by a voyeuristic vampire. The woman strips and reaches for her bath when her bloodshot eye follows her every move. She slips into the tub, gathers up soap and towel and begins lathering herself up in the foamy, suggestive manner which typifies the director's lurid laughter. The slender hand of the voyeuristic insider pushes open the bathroom door, the bathing maiden screams, and the vampire strikes.

Throughout the rest of this overly telly production, Franco manages to instill some feeling of sexual ambivalence. Even though the sex scenes within are pitifully slow and at times mundane, they are at least shot with the most care-free feel for which the director is noted. There is a violent action scene involving a vampire, but the resulting all-too-brief encounter is muddled and poorly composed. By the end of the film, you are slowly chewing the dispatching of Howard Vernon by the monster hunter as they drive a silver needle into his forehead. As they touch the coffin you feel a bit cheated, but dedicated knowing the film has ended.

Structurally, *LA FILLE DE DRÁCULA* is the simplest of the series. It is a plain telling rendition of the Karanzenfleschen myth in the film, the family name is Karanzenfleschen, with very little subtext. Naturally, as becomes a film of this type, the lecherous/vampire motif is the only redeeming quality save the very blood/make vampire (Vernon more or less re-creating his Dracula

role from *THE SCREAMING DEAD*) who lays on dead bodies from which he coo's. For the most part, the brutal sex scenes and monster mayhem aside, there are endless minutes of dull conversation woefully delivered in emotionless monotone (by Franco regularly) and fairly misquoted by an unimpaired Franco. To make matters worse, there is only a French-language version available, and that doesn't make it any easier to follow those talking heads (unless you know French, of course).

First Nichols stars as Maria Karanzenfleschen, when given a key to the family crypt by her dying mother, learns that she is the "daughter of Dracula." Entering the tomb she discovers and releases the blood-thirsty fiend. Once she is bitten by the Count, her latent lesbian leaning becomes sexual force which she uses as a guide for healing. Her first victim is her new lover Anne Lipton.

Howard Vernon is nominal (although great) non-role as the vampire Count Dracula, as the films saving grace. Between his very understated interpretation of a vampire, and the very energetic antics of his lesbian bloodsucker lady, there lies the uneasy feeling that the monster in the film isn't the only one (beside the viewer) who are aware of their other-worldliness. Nobody plays meaner than with any sort of real emotion. The only scream scream in the film is from the individual's gynecology as she has her blood siphoned off by Nichols. When the vampire's lodgings are discovered he is routinely destroyed without much as a "how do you do." It is as if the monsters are a burden which are pragmatically remedied. What of the vampires themselves? Nichols is a pretty lethargic dancer of the night. She makes love and leads to the female cast without much mish. There are lazy back-

huddling scenes, wherein Nichols moves aside, struts in Lipton's back which have obscured the camera's view of an erect nipple (of course, Franco dives in for a blurred close-up). It's only when hunger pang sets in that she then discharges her love, again in an exceedingly unattractive and lackluster way. Whereas Lipton's Dracula is a card-carrying, country clubbing member, and Lina's interpretation was a spunky, bloody go-getter. Vernon's corpse-like and semi-dominant vampire has just enough energy to clamor half way out of his coffin to feast on some ready-made human snacks. It's a slow film at around.

It can be said that Franco is a master when it comes to the sexually sick. It's without a doubt his monster movies excite their sexuality. Recently, Franco has been active in the action and war drama. His heyday is embrace the monster movie, no doubt due in part to the decrease in that genre's overall popularity. However, rinky-bardard he is, he is. Jesus Franco is a man not to be underestimated.

I would like to thank the following for their invaluable assistance in making this article possible: Horacio Higuchi, Craig Ledbetter, and David Todarello. For more crucial information on the films of Jesus Franco I suggest buying a copy of Tim Lucas' *THE VIDEO WATCHDOG BOOK*, \$19.95; P.O. BOX 5283, CINCINNATI, OH 45205-0283

OTHER NOTEWORTHY FRANCO MONSTER MOVIES

COUNT DRACULA

1969

Original Spanish Title: *EL CONDE DRACULA*Original West German Title: *NACHT, WENN DRACULA ERWACHT*Original Italian Title: *IL CONTE DRACULA*

COUNT DRACULA is an incredibly odd and wordy production — and despite that I like the film. Viewed by many critics to be Franco's most mundane, and starring Christopher Lee as the mustachioed Dracula, this project is a pretty far adaptation of the Bram Stoker novel.

VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD

1971

Original French Title: *UNE VIERGE CHEZ LES MORTS-VIVANTS*Original German Title: *EINE JUNGFRAU BEI DEN LEBENDIGEN TOTEN*

If this mangled print available on US video is any evidence of what the original film must have been like, then the untampered **A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD** must be amazing. Franco stars as a mute, slothlike piece of human garbage — the "butler" to a household of crazies ruled over by a manic Howard Vernon. A young woman has arrived at the house to collect on her father's will when odd images of corpses and devil worshipping torment her. She also encounters the unwell-tutored antics of her bizarre relatives and their partners. The US release logicalizes sex and violence out of the prof and inserts repeating images or "freezing" scenes when things really get rolling.

THE LOVES OF IRINA

1973

Original French Title: *LA COMTESSE AUX SEINS NUS*Original French Title for Adult Version: *LES NYMPHOMANES*Original German Title for Adult Version: *ENTFESSELTE BEGERDE*Alternate US Video Title: *KROTCHILL*

THE LOVES OF IRINA has been covered so frequently that any other review other than a brief mention would seem tedious. On this level of sleazemonger productions it is the ultimate film of its type. **THE LOVES OF IRINA** is Franco's pinhead erotic production, wherein he deftly blends art, sex, faith and hardcore depending on what version you are able to see: sadism and, of course, vampires. Franco's actress-wife Lina Romay plays the Countess Irina Karlovna, the ill-fated, love-stricken vampiress whose oral love making is the downfall of each of her lovers. You begin to wonder about Jess when you see him focus in on his wife sucking other people's genitals. **THE LOVES OF IRINA** is truly a film to reckon with.

MANHUNTER

1980

Original Italian Title: *IL CACCIATORE DI UOMINI*

MANHUNTER Franco's excursion into the jungle/zombiel genre features a bizarre, giant black native with grotesque bugged-out eyes as the monster. This strange creature bleats awfully howls before it strikes, resulting in sacrificial women (hemlock cases [black and white natives] noses manifest in). Besides the expected blood and guts (including blurred images of the monster chewing what looks like animals), there are copious amounts of nudity to keep the viewer alert. Franco has been reported as saying that John McTiernan stole his idea of a rampaging monster in the jungle for **PREDATOR** (1987).

OASIS OF THE ZOMBIES

1982

Original French Title: *EL TRÉSOR DES MORTS-VIVANTS*Original Spanish Title of the Alternate Version: *LA TUMBA DE LOS MUERTOS VIVIENTES*

Cutrated, cramped, and ultimately confusing, this combination features a Franco cameo as a zombie. Unimaginative sex scenes clutter an otherwise fun piece of maggoty undead mayhem. Nazi zombies are guarding a vast hoard of gold and fearless body-hunters are picked off one by one. Some nice gross, but little in the way of eroticism. Reported to be pieced together from an unfinished Franco project.



VIDEOCINE

Collection BUDGET



TOP: French poster art for Franco's **A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD**. ABOVE: French video box art for **MANHUNTER**. LEFT: Some maggoty monsters from **OASIS OF THE ZOMBIES**.

THE TRAVELLING MONSTER HUNTER

by Horacio Higuera

This column describes and reviews little-known or poorly reported monster movies from all over the world, based whenever possible on their original versions. Because many of those titles have not been written about in English-language publications, cast and credits are provided to correct or supplement reference material dear to all you serious buffs out there (you know who you are!). All dialogue quoted is guaranteed 100% authentic and attributed to the best of my ability.

KONCHŪ DAISENSŌ

(THE WAR OF THE INSECTS)

Peek out of a successful venture into adult oriented science fiction with **GOKE** — **BODY SNATCHER FROM HELL** / **KYŪKETSUKO DOKEMODORO** (Ijime Sato 1968) Shochiku studio released the world genre pioneer. With a plot book inspired by a factual incident that occurred in 1966 — the fall in the Spanish coast of a B-52 carrying nuclear weapons — **WAR OF THE INSECTS** belongs to the tradition of movies that exploit humanity's long implanted fear and loathing of swarming, seething, polluting creepy-crawly, gummy and awestruck insects but in their numbers. Some may question whether the film should belong in like-styled international mycra case for facts on the fact the insects here are not ordinary — they are artificially-induced mutants and therefore qualify as monsters.

From the moment humans get access to nuclear energy, the era of nuclear terror begins. A thick cloud of buzzing insects causes a B-52 bomber to go down near Nagoya, an island in the Inner Archipelago, not far from the coast of Japan. Only three crewmen manage to survive, including black private Charlie who had a fluke escape before the accident. In a naval base of an unsuspected Western superpower engaged in some war in Southeast Asia, Commander Gordon assigns two to investigate the crash and recover the payload of the downed aircraft. In the island, he finds Charlie in shock and the other crewman dead and promptly arrests small-time scoundrel Jog as a murder suspect.

Tokyo anthropologist Dr. Nagumo, for whom Jog collects rare insects, arrives at Kiyomizu provide a employee a mission. He is sent immediately out of the specimen he got from Jog — a small insect from that carries any virus from the mutant. Nagumo, a humanist, soon clashes with Gordon. He suspects the "Warrior" military are there to retrieve an H bomb from the fallen plane, so to cover up the ultra secret Operation Iron Arrow. His explanation is given as to how he came to know so much about such covert operations. But he agrees to help the commander investigate Charlie who screams "Insects!" in his delirium he also finds insect bite marks on the dead crewman. When Charlie's forced to face documentary about those entomophiles, he freaks out and battles a big bug swarm killed his companions. Gordon dismisses the man's statement, taking for the delusions of a drug addict who got hooked "in the battlefield down there in the South", but when nobody else is around, he helps Charlie and warns him "We're got to retrieve the bomb before the world finds out about this, or our policy will be in deep trouble".

About to be re-arrested in Japan for trait, Jog jumps into the ocean and puts himself inside Annabelle. She is an attractive, embittered woman, a insect-hope who, because of her experiences as a victim of a bio-concentration camp, knows full of artificial hatred against humanity, an amateur entomologist who is also being financed by "Eastern" spies to breed insects for biological warfare. The spies intend Charlie to interrogate him about the downed airplane, and Annabelle subverts the black man to a sadistic torture session using the strange insects. "Man should not practice violence," reads Annabelle "we should look up to the insects." Charlie, who gradually loses his mind due to the insects, soon admits there was an H bomb in the plane and is left wandering in the jungle. Now hopelessly brain-dead, the black man attacks both his prey's pregnant, long-suffering wife Yukari and her nurse Jinta. Morally outraged by Gordon "abuses out the world genocide and death," Nagumo finds millions of insect eggs embedded in his body and believes they have been "incubating here for some time."

Meanwhile, Annabelle refuses to continue helping the spy sponsors. "I don't care to enter the Free World or the Communist world," she goes. "These insects can drive humankind to the point of insanity — I call breed and release them upon the entire world!" Finally getting hold of himself, Jog — who did not know about the insects' dark side — escapes and returns home to get reconciled with his wife. Still thinking of Charlie's last words, Nagumo conjectures the insects must have given him some unique insight as their version of his system. He decides to have access to the same experience and lets himself be bitten (in the chest) by one of the insects. Hallucinating, he sees the bugs communicating among themselves and hearing a threat: "The Earth does not belong to humans alone! Humankind will destroy itself by means of nuclear weapons, and we shall accelerate this process. Kill all humans! Genocide! Annihilate humankind!" Thanks to carefully controlled experimentation, the scientist recovers, lives, later and concludes that highly intelligent insects deliberately caused the fall of the B-52 and are indeed planning to take over the planet.

The vindictive and by now totally whacked-out Annabelle captures Nagumo to bind him and bring him to the others, over the years. She had created enormous insects and created an ultra-sentient mutant capable of synthesizing that powerful reaction. She also admits the insects used the black woman as a puppet for her bugs and caused her death. Naturally, Nagumo believes Annabelle's plans and makes her feel victim of her own scheme. When Gordon arrives, the insects had already fed and he orders he be executed. In the meantime, he escapes and the border is adjacent island — discovered with the deadly bugs. Soon Jog and Yukari are trapped in a house and surrounded by the vermin in a last act of redemption. Jog sacrifices himself to save his wife.

Gordon takes Nagumo aboard a plane to transport and reveals his plan to detonate the H bomb by using a remote control to prevent it from falling into enemy hands and at the same time kill the insects — never mind that their occupation of the island will perish and that the radioactive dust will probably inflict Japan. Suddenly one of the crewmen and Jinta, the commander, but in the confusion the detector is activated. A swarm of insects engulfs and destroys the plane while a phenomenal mushroom rises in the horizon. Yukari who left the island on a boat to give birth to her child is the only survivor.

WAR OF THE INSECTS opened in Japan in November 1968, double billed with Kato Miatsuna's Gothic style sci-fi horror **Horror Melodrama LIVING SKELETON** / **KYŪKETSUKO DOKEMODORO** (to be covered in a future issue). It was later reported to the European market under the title **GENOCIDE** — in Italy it was shown with spurious credits (directed by Norman Cooper with Karl Rogers, Diana Ross, Charlie Martin...) as **ALLUCINANTE FINE DELL'UMANITÀ** — and to countries with capitalist Japanese communities. As for the U.S., it may have played in the so-called "banned circuit" in some cities, but has never been on general release.

Wonder if the fact of exposure in this country was not due in part to the firm critical view of the U.S. military and its perception in Vietnam. Her courtesies are mirrored in the dialogue other than parentheses like "Free World." The East and "The West" — this was the "diplomatic" approach when before in Tono's **THE LAST MAN** / **SEKIGUNOSEN** (Shun: Matsuyoshi 1961) — but what nation in the world possessed a B-52 bomber on its coast? Entomologist Nagumo, representing the roots of reason and unfeeling humanity, spends a lot of time counting cold-blooded Commander Gordon's hawkish moves. Whether the latter defends his country's aggressive foreign policy with the same forced excuse "We're fighting for democracy and independence!" the scientist bravely replies "That doesn't mean you're doing it for justice!" The American brass is portrayed as a hypocritical, paranoid cope obsessed with ruling the enemy and covering up its dirty deeds. In turn, the Eastern spies do their much better being also unscrupulous and cruel (point to the point of including the vicious Annabelle as a suspect) with no remorse or night sleep in fact (sleep as the keyword, except for the late theme and the expecting mother, everybody else in the story seems to have come out of the insect gene cesspool of our species, spanning centuries with various acts of brutality, sadism, sexual harassment, treachery, cowardice, hypocrisy and cowardice, in diverse combinations. The script practically makes a case for the insects to revolt: this movie the largest collection of creep, scumbags and twinks ever assembled until the latest Revisionist National Convention.

But such a depressing view of humankind does not leave the screenwriters of the movie hook. If by having Caucasian Commander Gordon savagely mislead back private Charlie the movie appears to encourage racism (every characterization of the commander's victim would probably please your average Asian fan), Annabelle, Charlie is a pathetic figure — a cowardly insectivore, sexually repressed drug addict with no dignity whatsoever. Even his wife Jinta, like him an animal when "interrogated" by Lord's Method style thoughtless torture. And when Charlie sees him and tries to save both Yukari and Jinta, he is pretty much depicted as a blind beast that must be put to rest. A sincerely excessive suggestion of certain scenes in the original version of **ESPY** / **ESUPA** (J. J.

doing something constructive to help them. It's like in those thrillers where the stranger has the interior rope around the girl's neck while the cops outside keep banging at the door instead of breaking in. The most memorable moment in the movie is the psychedelic hallucination scene, very much like *Tron*, that follows Nagura's masochistic desire as a mutant insect to bite him — a tip to Vincent Price's classic LSD acid injection in *THE TIGER*. Otherwise, for all the spectacle, *Nihonmaki* doesn't handle well the special effects department. The miniature work is poor and the artist's effects never convincing. The insect footage is also disappointing for instead of showing various species of bugs weighing in on humanity, the focus is on the rather underwhelming mutants. There are just regular bees from a distance and a species of ant in closeup — a number of which have rather nasty shots of them peeing with their stinkblows something meant to represent bits of human flesh. For the swim shots, the old standby of using sea leaves in a water tank comes in handy.

One humorous detail is the fact that our entomologist hero wears out white shirt, pants and jacket throughout the movie — in the bath at the bar, in the jungle everywhere. Yet, even after exploring movie caves, scuffling with thugs, braving lethal insects, being punched and shoved and roughed up all over, he could never get soiled or stained? Or he got a clean **THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT**?

KONCHŪ DAISENSŌ Export title: **WAR OF THE INSECTS: GENOCIDE** Shochiku Eiga (Japan), 1968. Director: Kazuo Mihonematsu. Screenplay: Susumu Takahara. Story: Tetsuo Arita. Cinematography: Shigeo Himeas & Shozaburo Shionuma. Lighting: Tetsuo Arita. Music: Shunsuke Kikuchi. Film editor: Akimitsu Terada. Art director: Tetsuhiko Yoshino. Set decorator: Ryozo Nakamura. Special effects: Japan Film Special Effects Co., Keisuke Kawahara & Shun Suganuma. Optical effects: Shinichi Kikawa. Sound: Kian Nakamura. Sound effects: Takashi Matsunoto. Production manager: Masato Noto. Assistant director: Kiyu Shiraki. Continuity: Masayuki Fukuyama. Still photography: Kazumi Kajimoto & Masashi Kaneda. Film processing: Far East Laboratories. Producer: Tsuneo Otsuna. Cast: Keisuke Sato (Dr. Yoshio Nagura), Yusuke Kawazu (Jip Akayama), Erii Shindo (Yohari Akayama), Reiko Hiron (Juniko Komura), Kaifu Horan (Aragabell), Rolf Jessup (Commander Gordon), Chico Roland (Charlie), Toshiyuki Ichimura (Kondō), Tadayuki Ueda (Matsunaga), Hiroshi Aoyama (Yokoy), Saburo Aonuma (Police commissioner), Harold S. Conway (Commanding officer), Tatsumi Ichijima, Hidetaka Komen, Mike Daneen, Franz Gruber, Wolfram Pekeshas, William Trapp, Rainer Gessman, Hardy Bauman. Running time: 84 minutes. ShochikuScope, Fujicolor.

THE SAGA OF THE VIKING WOMEN AND THEIR VOYAGE TO THE WATERS OF THE GREAT SEA SERPENT

"They can be handled — they're only men."

— Enger (Susan Cabot)

Lest we would forget the U.S. of A. is also part of the international community of monster flick-producing nations, let us focus on domestic fare for a change. So we do with this engaging Gorman cheapie which, despite its cut potential, remains the most hard to catch (if all of July-Roger's) series in feature. It is rarely — if at all — shown on TV nowadays, so far as I know, it is not available on video even from the cottage specialty. Plus, contrary to the other Gorman can't carry **THE UNDEAD** (1956), it has yet to be offered on cable services. I was privileged with the opportunity to watch it again after more than twenty years since I saw it on late-late TV. The film of an American International International held under the auspices of the Harvard Film Archive (!) Studio co-heads Samuel Z. Arkoff was present for the occasion, clearly enjoying the chance to casually drop some what over the hallowed grounds of the mostnot and most overrated educational institution in the whole wide world.

The movie's thrudingly explicit, self-explanatory title must have been its main drawing card as well. Nearly half the film. The story opens as 9th-century Viking settlement on the coast. All the able men have long gone on a voyage and the women are getting restless. After a decision-making board meeting of Olympic proportions, where issues are resolved in a given throwing contest, the women vote to go in search of their male companions. Led by Desir, they build a small ship and sail westward to uncharted waters — and soon face a brave a lethal Vortex and the Great Sea Serpent that lurks nearby. The craft is then crushed by lightning and the survivors — six women and one wayward male teenager (Otar) — are cast ashore on a strange land. Stark, ruler of the belated Gorms, captures the women and — much to the annoyance of his effeminate son Senja, who prefers men — intends to embrace them as he did previously with the contingent of missing male Vikings. (It becomes clear that the Gorms rely on the Vortex and the Great Sea Serpent to obtain castaways for their slave labor force.) Before their formal captivity starts, however, the women are invited to join a banquet during which Desir saves the cowardly Senja from certain death. She arouses Stark's interest but takes to him and is locked up together with the other women.

The women soon find a way to leave the prison untraced and discover their men chained to the walls of a mine. Desires to free her lover Vedic, but a frustration by the betrayal of one of the women, Enger — who also wants Vedic and more her and befriends him over, allies with Stark and denounces her complices out of spite. Yet when Desir and Vedic are condemned to burn at the stake, Enger has second thoughts and, as a former high priestess, conjures divine forces to extinguish the impending flames. Senja is killed by a thunderbolt and the Norvian revolt, easily defeating the Gorms, despite everything. Vedic, magnanimously spares Stark and allows him to bury his son. As the Vikings prepare to leave (in two tiny canoes), the humiliated Stark gathers the

remains of his army to go after and Enger heroically sacrifices herself to allow her people to escape. Reaching the Vortex Vedic loses the awesome Sea Serpent and manages to drive a dagger into the beast's skull. The morally weakened monster turns to the pursuing Gorms and vessel and ferociously slaughters dogs Stark and his men down to Desir Jones's sister. The Vikings resume their voyage home.

Appearance notwithstanding, nobody should mistake the for some before it's too late. Reaching the Vortex Vedic is all gung-ho and bravado until they get to the island confronting the Gorms. They don't possess much of a resistance to captivity (to the probable delight of babes behind bars flick junkies) and as soon as they find their male comrades, they melt further, slip back and leave the action in the rear. The more manager P.C. advocates may find the whole thing explosive (it is exploitation movie after all) and a projection of male fantasies about athletic women, indeed, our smugging amazons mostly press their proud legs into service less to kick than to run or simply parade — and there are more cheeseable shots than one would expect in a Thriller commercial. However, only the morose and poorly heist cinematic take much offense at the \$120,000 bargain basement mortgage. At least these Norsewomen are not portrayed as brainless blonde bombas, a situation easy to imagine those bleach-

FABULOUS! SPECTACULAR!
The raw courage of women without men

Viking Women and the Sea Serpent



¹ The title as it appears in posters, lobby cards and press materials is **VIKING WOMEN AND THE SEA SERPENT**. The alignment reportedly happened after the poster was completed and the original title on was too long to fit in minuscule margins. The opening credits however, proudly display the full version.

twined "Vikings" look more at home sailing in Venice Beach than navigating the Shetlands.

Drive in fodder like this is supposed to be aimed at teenagers, but there is something strange about the age bracket of the characters here. When the Viking women are shown by themselves, they are apparently meant to represent young wives or at least post-teen singles; the only male in their company is the immature Otar, who is clearly incompatible with his company for a meaningful relationship — his rapport with Thyra (Betsy Jones-Moreland) sweet as it is, is just fraternal (Otar is played by Jonathan Price, enthusiastically but uncomfortably trying to pass for someone a decade and a half younger — and you thought those wannabe James Deans of that stupid TV show about a coped looked too old to still be in high school). But the Viking men are in the mold of Hollywood teen stars — one of them, in fact, played by Gary "Teenage Frankenstein" Conway himself — coverage sure, but acceptable as such by convention. The meeting of Norsewomen with Norsemen must have represented powers to the former, since from then on the couples formed arm for audience identification and start looking no older than the smoochers in the car next to yours. (Curiously, that has the effect of making Otar the equivalent of your girlfriend's past of a kid brother.)

In a number of interviews, Cormen claimed that he and the AIP brass were suckered into making this movie by special effects vet Jack Rabin, who pitched his associate living Black's story with a collection of exciting action-packed sketches; they reportedly reacted too late the possibility of missing Rabbin's artwork with the allocated funds. The low budget shows itself — for example, what is supposed to be a darker or a snailier ship is obviously a refitted hobby

decorated with a dragon figurehead, cardboard shields and a square sail.² And because of financial constraints, the two instances of ephyra in the story — that is, a cloud in the shape of a long ship giving the women the divine light they asked for and later the Sea Serpent appearing on cue at the Gormall

leader's mission — drew out more than they owe. Still, Cormen approaches his subject with gusto, gleaming over the plot glitches (for instance, why would captives invite slaves to a hunting party and give them mounts and weapons?) and production misadventures like a kid playing with cheap toy soldiers with the fervor of a real-life commander-in-chief. He doesn't entirely succeed in diverting us from the showstopping nature of his pecuniary resources, but he certainly pulls off a really enjoyable smokescreen. Another often further proof of his bravado in handling outdoor action, something he wouldn't have much occasion to display in his later Fox series.

Also contributing to offset the cheapness and key to the genuine entertainment value of this movie is the spry lead, let's get at least an A for effort attitude of the underdog cast. As usual, the good of gang of Cormen regularly go for it with worth and then some, as if they thought this ten-day wonder were a big studio blockbuster. They are never less than entertaining, but if it's the least great Susan Cabot who makes the most lasting impression as the semiretired Engr. We all know she is trouble from the beginning because (a) she is the only brunette in the group and (b) she is demurely clad — is she hiding something? — yet she is the most overtly sensual. Cabot's fine performance brings an underlying feeling of solitude and sadness in Engr even as she is betraying her complete, a dimension perfectly in tune with the later revelation of her position as a high priestess. The role is admittedly more rounded than the others, but a lesser actress couldn't have elicited the same degree of sympathy for the character at her darkest moment. Pig is the more conventional heroine Desir and not Engr, who saves and humiliates the outrageously effete Gorm (Jay Sawyer) we could have been for a memorable confrontation. It is a measure of the unfairness of the agent game that talented people like Cabot, Hilda or Dick Miller never achieved more than cult status in a small circle of fans, while another Cormen alumnus — a grossly overrated mediocre one-industry hero — soaks his audience and gets his hands on the Oscars and an big live dough.)

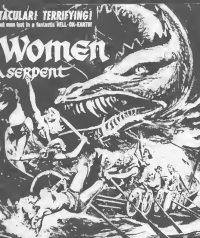
² The voyage is also a technical impossibility, as the women break their steering oar — a piece of equipment fundamental for Viking offshore navigation procedures — as soon as they leave (information courtesy of the Institute of Maritime Studies, a subsidiary of The Monarch International Foundation think tank for a better informed America.)



A tense moment from Roger Cormen's **VIKING WOMEN AND THE SEA SERPENT**.

ACULAR! TERRIFYING!
and more fast in a fantastic **HELL-ON-EARTH**

Women and the Sea Serpent



Exotic Poster Art
from **THE SAGA
OF THE VIKING
WOMEN AND
THEIR VOYAGE
TO THE WATERS
OF THE GREAT
SEA SERPENT** -
with the title
slightly abridged.

But what about the actual second line of this magazine—the monster you ask? The Sea Serpent consists of a more or less elaborate dragon head [very similar in shape to that featured in the poster of George Pal's *THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM*] attached to a long neck just that. The paper-mâché contraption is apparently dragged by wires across miniature waves created in a water tank. This ruse is surprisingly effective, although underutilized—in fact, pretty marginal to the story, as if the crew involved were afraid of not getting away with its very simplicity. There is also a head-and-neck hand puppet that doesn't resemble much the other model and appears in a long shot owed to villain Stark's call. Other special effects are equally elementary but less sensitive. The background projections for the sea voyage scenes would've convinced the most glibbie. To move onto developments in the audience: even the angle the monster is photographed from owes from the shot.

One big mystery remains: Considering the pretty budget and customary frightened concerns, how the hell could Coman afford to get those horses for the hunting party scene? Perhaps they were left over from *FIVE GUNS WEST*?



THE SAGA OF THE VIKING WOMEN AND THEIR VOYAGE TO THE WATERS OF THE GREAT SEA SERPENT

Abridged title: *VIKING WOMEN AND THE SEA SERPENT*. Malibu Productions (USA), 1967. Director and producer: Roger Corman. Screenplay: Lawrence Louis Goldman. Story: Irving Block. Cinematography: Monroe P. Askins. Music: Albert Glasser. Film editor: Ronald Sinclair. Art director: Robert Kinoshita. Special effects: Jack Rubin, Irving Block. Props: DeWitt. Makeup: Harry Ross. Wardrobe: Gwen Feizer. Sound: Herman Lewis. Production manager: Lionel C. Place. Assistant director: Jack Bohrer. Choreography: Wilda Taylor. Executive producers: James H. Nicholson, Samuel Z. Arkoff. Cast: Abby Dalton (Desir), Susan Cabot (Engel), Jane Kenney (Asmik), Betsy Jones-Moreland (Thyra), Jonathan Haze (Ottar), Richard Devon (Grimault King Stone), Brad Jackson (Wing leader Vedrick Jay Sayer [Grimault prince Senja]), Gary Conway (Jarl), Lynn Bernay (First Wiving woman), Lesley Todd (Second Wiving woman), Mark Forest (First Wiving warrior), Wilda Taylor (Dancer). Running time: 70 minutes. Black and white. Not released on videotape; 16mm rental print available from Kit Parker Films.

SANTO CONTRA LOS ASESINOS DE OTROS MUNDOS (SANTO VS. THE KILLERS FROM OUTER SPACE)

Pop quiz: what is the most ridiculous, pathetic, downright about monster you've ever seen on movies or on TV? The long-necked, rubber-tubed guy with dust-bathes stuck-on-it flapping wings from *THE GIANT GILA*? The deformed contraption from *REPTILICUS*? The caper with a head from *THE CREEPING TERROR*? Anything [Lary Buchanan or Bill Rebane]? The hea-at-it again Gaddy Warlock Texan megamaneiac who looks like a genetic development of the mutant baby from *GRASERHEAD*?

If the answer is any of the above, then you haven't seen *SANTO CONTRA LOS ASESINOS DE OTROS MUNDOS*. For the unnamed "creature" featured in this Mexican flick is absolutely, positively the cheesiest movie monster ever to grace a movie or TV screen, bar none. The Traveling Monster Hunter barely unconditionally guarantees this statement and challenges all readers to prove him wrong. To wit: the unimpressive, unstopable, uncompromisingly unappealing Horror from Outer Space flick is all about a bit of a piece of tape that thrown over some weeping extras (whose contours are plainly visible) in a profit simulation of some amorphous, amoeboid behemoth. I can't imagine even the most feeble-minded, mentally impaired, vice-presidential in the audience being fooled for a second into believing this limbering piece of mail—could that be the same one on which Santo went off?—is something else, let alone a living organism. Thus, for the sake of spiritual integrity and public decorum, I'll be referring to the "creature" ineptly throughout this review.

It doesn't help matters that this "blob" (if you pardon the overstatement) pops up right off onto your face in the first half minute of the movie, before the credits. Your immediate reaction is of stupefaction and total disbelief: your notion of reality is thrown out of orbit, and for a split second you try to rationalize why this hapless actor on the screen is struggling so desperately with a piece of grease-stained canvas. As you decide the true meaning of that astounding sight, your brain simply clicks into neutral and loses its bearings, surrendering to the numbing forces that drag it away toward absolute vacuum.

The "monster" kills and mutilates four people associated to the economic well-being of the Mexican nation. (No legs, considering.) Police inspector O'Connor [sic] senses the situation is very serious indeed: since the authorities have called Santo, the Man in the Silver Mask, to help in the investigation. A madman named Maloch appears on the inspector's personal TV communication channel and demands 10 million in gold bars to be delivered to him in 24 hours or else. Government officials at first smile a bit, but next day, worried Dr. Chamberlain and his family are devoured by the "blob". The ever-magnificent Maloch gives them another 48 hours to fulfill his demands, promising another key personality will die each day in case of delay.

The government decides to simply let Santo handle the job, since that carries the risk. The masked hero fights his way into Maloch's hideout where eventually captured. Tossed into an arena and forced to fight three gladiators (two in the classic Roman mold, one equipped with a flamethrower).

Santo soon turns the tables and guns down everybody in sight, mostly wounding Maloch himself. The dying villain explains he kidnapped the long-missing Professor Bernstein, an scientist who had discovered intelligent alien microorganisms living in an enervated form in a sample of lunar rock. Maloch has one of the moon rock samples, and exposing it to the atmosphere inside the microorganisms active again and develop into a voracious, blob-like super-colony. As he further explains the former associate Llor has hidden Bernstein and a second piece of lunar rock, he stupidly leaves his own rock sample unguarded and unattended while he blabs on and on. Soon the sample bubbles and foams and oozes what looks like a load of shaving cream, and turns into one of the dead-end trap—uh "blob" things. The babbling Maloch still has time to utter human and could be facing the worst enemy ever drafted off before finally going under the real Santo, however, manages to take off on a plane, leaving the "monster" behind.

Santo gets into Bernstein's house and surprises Karen, the scientist's daughter. At first she seems not to recognize the masked man, but when told she wants to rescue her father, she feels relieved. "Only one man could come out of nowhere to rescue somebody"—El Santo! (Perhaps there are scores of bare-chested men waiting, chickened red capes and silver masks all over Mexico, so the poor girl wasn't sure who he was.) At that moment some off-Llor's men show up to try to kidnap Karen—why now? asks the hapless audience—and our hero intervenes. The attempt fails and Santo captures one of Llor's minions, who is killed by remote-controlled lethal gas before he can speak. Eventually Llor succeeds in kidnapping Karen and threatens her so her father would reveal what he knows about the lunar rock organisms. Santo quickly realizes the show of the dead Llor herman contain a special kind of mud found only in a remote region "south of the mountains," and it doesn't take him more than a couple of minutes to get to the rock. (Llor's girlfriend uncovers the moon rock sample and soon pays dearly for her curiosity, as a new "blob" emerges.) Santo loads Llor down, removes him from the latter the remote-control device that threatens Karen and leaves him unconscious to be knocked off by the "creature" (Yep, no mercy for scumbags). The hero escapes with Karen and Bernstein and realizes the "monster" needs oxygen, leads it to a cave filled with methane ("gas"). A flicker of a cigarette lighter causes an instant explosion that destroys the "creature" and the Man in the Silver Mask seems to vanish.

This is a strange, apocryphal entry in the Santo series in many respects. For one thing, the structure of the story is so awkward one can't help but be impressed there could have been major changes in staff halfway through the shooting. Why have two megagillies, two hideous, two labo, two lunar rocks, two "microbes"? Instead there are two separate plottings, that are left in various stages of resolution, so the last "monster"—clearly a different individual from the one destroyed at the end—is left untrapped at Maloch's airport runway, probably ready to resume its nefarious torpedoon activities should the occasion arise. The two antagonists are also apocryphal, while the last heavy, Maloch, is in the

tactics of the snoring, sneezing, snickering, snorting, snubbing, deflational ruckus (see, for instance, **SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA LOS MONSTRUOS**) he is abruptly killed in the first half hour — before he is given a chance to threaten the leading lady for chissakes — to give way to an altogether lackluster successor, Likur, who doesn't even dignify his gun-motif gimmick with a name. Another departure for the series is the total absence of wrestling-ring fight footage: these are replaced by the gladiator challenge sequence — admittedly more orthodox as superheroic vs. archvillain stories go, but also better staged and contextually more appropriate than the customary pack lifting pro bout stock inserts. In fairness, director Rubén Galindo should be credited for a more dynamic handling of the action scenes with a nervous, highly mobile camerawork that slots some excellent agitation (showing budget hand-caps). He would later show a much improved master-of-slime in **SANTO CONTRA LAS LUGAS**.

Of course it is easy to dismiss this and other little-known wrestler epics for the cheap exploitation flicks they are. Yet their tackiness is supplemented by the cheerful, enthusiastic way they bring out their heroes — ever ready to satisfactorily unfurl the light the most hackneyed mod scenarios, the cheesiest monsters, the cheesiest endings as if the very outcome of Armageddon were in jeopardy. In the present case, surely it must have taken the cast and crew enormous determination

and willpower to play along with this preposterous "creature without cracking up." In slightly more upscale B-movie monsters are often added in postproduction; the actors who worked on **THE GIANT CLAW** or **REPTILIOUS** could perform in all earnestness, imagining they are facing monsters worthy of their efforts. (Poor sage.) No such chance here: the omnipresent "monster" had an on-the-set interaction with its "victim" and cameramen were supposed to keep a straight face all the time, pretending to be really terrified by this trigger snafu of tarp. Behold your laughter: this no nonsense approach, this resolute desire to overlook the glaring shortcomings of hastily written scripts and less-than-adequate production values by forced sheer confidence in what they are doing deserves respect, not scorn. The sincerity with which Mexican filmmakers handle their material and meager resources is infinitely more admirable than the condescension displayed by ignorances of Michael Medved's ilk, or the lets-get-back-and-bank-on-it attitude of the unrelatable drack that has been recently effacing the USA Cable Network for the detection of late-night vidios.

Santo's unique persona is remarkable for its evolution: that of a sports hero who became mythologized for his athletic abilities (actual or perceived) across the spectrum of popular media, his actual immobility in the ring against "real" adversaries — no matter how rigged were his matches — according to a new dimension when maintained on the

screen against fictional foes from folklore (La Llorona, the mummies of Guanajuato) or from lore (the Universal monsters). Fingers could believe in his screen exploits because he was after all "true-life" wrestling champion El Santo. (The only American equivalent of this kind of "reality-to-fantasy image-shifting" entertainer I can think of is escape artist-turned action movie star Harry Houdini.) French film expert Michel Penoux said Santo is probably "the Mexican Western [movie] myth figure an entire people has identified with." While I don't totally agree with this statement — considering many Oriental national film heroes enjoyed instant popular identification in their respective countries — it is also true that the relatively few Santo pictures that could bypass the Anglo-American grip on international film distribution were able to find their South American to the Far East, a far from negligible popularity in numerous showings. He really struck a chord among third-world audiences. I certainly prefer this bulky barrel-chested, physically unconventional hero who doesn't even have a secret identity — he wears his mask all the time and is just plain El Santo in or out of the ring — and gives it all against impossible material economic odds, to any over-the-hill American superheroes in a hi-tech body suit and full of huge pseudo-ego! So, *¡viva* El Santo! in all his low budget glory — and if cheese in Spanish is quasi and nightmare, is paradise, pass another serving of quesadillas, por favor.

SANTO CONTRA LOS ASESINOS DE OTROS MUNDOS. Alternative title: ASESINOS DE OTROS MUNDOS

Production title: SANTO VS. EL ÁTOMO VIVIENTE. Filmmakers: Chapultepec (Mexico), 1971. Director: Rubén Galindo. Screenplay: Ramón Obón. Story: Ramón Obón & Rubén Galindo. Cinematography: Raúl Martínez Solares. Music: Jesús Zarcoza. Film editor: Jorge Bustos. Art director / special effects: [not credited]. Makeup: Margarita Ortega. Hair stylist: María de Jesús López. Sound: James L. Fields (supervisor), Rodolfo Solís (recording), Ramón Moreno (mixing). Sights: García (editor). Sound effects: Ricardo Sáenz. Production manager: José Luis Orduña Guzmán. Assistant director: Jesús Mann. Titles: Eduardo Mendoza. Production unit: "Anónima". Unit manager: Enrique Morán. Script supervisor: Javier Camacho. Camera operator: Cirilo Rodríguez. Assistant operator: Teodoro García. Lighting: Horacio Calvillo. Assistant editor: Joaquín Ceballos. Stills: Joaquín Agüero. Film processing: Chumbusco-Artesa. Color consultant: Rafael Leal. Producer: Pedro Galindo Aguilar. Cast: Santo (Rodolfo Guzmán Huerta) (Himself), Juan Gallardo (Boris Likur), Sasha Montenegro (Karen Bernstein), Carlos Agostí (Malossi), Marco Antonio "Viruta" Campos (Professor Bernstein), Patricia Borges (Likur's girlfriend), Carlos Sulraz (Inspector O'Connor), Gerardo Zapeta (Likur's henchman), Sonia Fuentes (victim), Cesar Valente, Carlos Guerrero. Color. Running time: 82 min.

EL SANTO



A FILMOGRAPHY OF SANTO, EL ENMASCARADO DE PLATA

Here is a revised, complete (?) filmography of Santo, the Man in the Silver Mask (né Rodolfo Guzmán Huerta, 1915 [or 1917]—1984), listing alternative titles and directors. Dates quoted refer to year of production, not release, in some cases, they are approximate, since many Mexican production reports lag work periods (e.g., 1965-70, 1970-71), not calendar years. Unless otherwise indicated, all movies are Mexican productions.

		REY DEL CRÍMEN (Federico Curiel)		LEPROSOS Y EL SEXO (René Cardona Sr.)
		SANTO EN EL HOTEL DE LA MUERTE (Federico Curiel)		SANTO EN LA VENGANZA DE LA MUERTE (René Cardona Sr.)
1962		SANTO CONTRA LAS MUJERES VAMPIRO (JOS SAMSON VS THE VAMPIRE WOMEN) (Alfonso Corona Blake)		SANTO CONTRA LA MAPA DEL VICIO / MISIÓN SABOTAJE (Federico Curiel)
				LAS MUJERES DE GUANAJUATO (Federico Curiel)
1963		SANTO EN EL MUSEO DE CERA (JOS SAMSON EN THE WAX MUSEUM) (Alfonso Corona Blake)	1971	SANTO CONTRA LA NIJA DE FRANKENSTEIN (Miguel M. Delgado)
		SANTO CONTRA EL ESTRANGULADOR (René Cardona Sr.)		SANTO CONTRA LOS ASESINOS DE OTROS MUNDOS / ASESINOS DE OTROS MUNDOS / SANTO CONTRA EL ÁTOMO VIVIENTE (Rubén Galindo)
		SANTO CONTRA EL ESPECTRO / EL ESPECTRO DEL ESTRANGULADOR (René Cardona Sr.) (See just to title above)		SANTO EN MISIÓN SUICIDA / MISIÓN SUICIDA (Federico Curiel)
1964		BLUE DEMON CONTRA EL PODER SATÁNICO / EL PODER SATÁNICO (Chano Urueta) (Santi appearance)		SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA DRÁCULA Y EL HOMBRE LOBO (Miguel M. Delgado)
		SANTO EN ATACAN LAS BRUJAS / ATACAN LAS BRUJAS / SANTO EN LA CASA DE LAS BRUJAS (José Díaz Morales)		SANTO Y EL ÁGUILA REAL / SANTO Y LA TIJERES (Alfredo B. Cavena)
		SANTO CONTRA EL HACHA DIABÓLICA / EL HACHA DIABÓLICA (José Díaz Morales)		SANTO FRENTE A LA MUERTE (Fernando Orozco)
1965		PROFANADORES DE TUMBAS / LOS TRAFICANTES DE LA MUERTE (José Díaz Morales)	1972	SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA LAS BESTIAS DEL TERROR / LAS BESTIAS DEL TERROR (Alfredo B. Cavena)
		SANTO CONTRA EL BARÓN BRÁKOLA / EL BARÓN BRÁKOLA (José Díaz Morales)		SANTO CONTRA LA MAGIA NEGRA (Alfredo B. Cavena)
1966		SANTO CONTRA LA INVASIÓN DE LOS MARCIANOS (Alfredo B. Cavena)		SANTO CONTRA LOS SEQUESTRADORES (Federico Curiel)
		SANTO CONTRA LOS VILLANOS DEL RING (Alfredo B. Cavena)		SANTO CONTRA EL DOCTOR MUERTE (Rafael Romero Marchent—Mexican-Spanish co-production)
		OPERACIÓN 17 / LA ESMERALDA MALDITA (René Cardona Sr. & J.)	1973	SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA EL DR. FRANKENSTEIN (Miguel M. Delgado)
		SANTO EN EL TESORO DE MOCTEZUMA / EL TESORO DE MOCTEZUMA (René Cardona Sr. & J.)	1974	SANTO Y MANTÉVILLA NÁPOLES EN LA VENGANZA DE LA LLORONA / LA VENGANZA DE LA LLORONA / LA PAVOROSA VENGANZA DE LA LLORONA (Miguel M. Delgado)
1967		SANTO EN EL TESORO DE DRÁCULA (Alternative "toy" version EL VAMPIRO Y EL SEXO) (René Cardona Sr.)		SANTO CONTRA EL ANÓNIMO MORTAL (Alicé Mont)
1968		SANTO CONTRA CAPULINA / CAPULINA CONTRA EL SANTO (René Cardona Sr. & Alfredo Zacarias)		SANTO EN EL MISTERIO DE LA PERLA NEGRA / EL MISTERIO DE LA PERLA NEGRA (Fernando Orozco)
		SANTO EN EL MUNDO DE LOS MUERTOS / SANTO CONTRA LOS MUERTOS (Giberto Martínez Solares)		SANTO CONTRA LAS LOBAS (Rubén Galindo)
		SANTO CONTRA BLUE DEMON EN LA ATLÁNTIDA / BLUE DEMON CONTRA EL SANTO (Julian Soler)		SANTO EN ORO NEGRO / ORO NEGRO / LA NOCHE DE SAN JUAN (Federico Curiel—Mexican-Puerto Rican co-production)
1969		SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA LOS MONSTRUOS (Giberto Martínez Solares)	1978	SANTO Y BLUE DEMON EN EL MISTERIO DE LAS BERMUDAS (Giberto Martínez Solares)
		SANTO CONTRA LOS CAZADORES DE CABEZAS (René Cardona Sr.)		SANTO EN LA FRONTERA DEL TERROR / SANTO CONTRA LA SOMBRA BLANCA (Rafael Pérez Grevas)
		SANTO CONTRA LOS ASESINOS DE LA MAPA (Manuel Bengoa & Fanny Mancosco—Mexican-Spanish co-production)	1980	SANTO CONTRA EL ASESINO DE LA TELEVISIÓN (Rafael Pérez Grevas)
1968		MISIÓN SECRETA EN EL CARIBE / MISIÓN SECRETA (Enrique Eguluz—Spanish-Mexican co-production)	1981	SANTO EN LA PUNTA DE LOS KARATECAS / LA PUNTA DE LOS KARATECAS (Alternative version EL PUÑO DE LA MUERTE) (Alfredo B. Cavena)
1961		SANTO CONTRA LOS ZOMBIES (JOS INVASION OF THE ZOMBIES) (René Cardona Sr.)		CHANCÓ Y EL HUIO DEL SANTO CONTRA LOS VAMPIROS ASESINOS (Rafael Pérez Grevas)
		SANTO CONTRA EL CEREBRO DIABÓLICA (Federico Curiel)		
		SANTO CONTRA EL REY DEL CRÍMEN / EL	1970	SANTO CONTRA LOS JINETES DEL TERROR (Alternative "toy" version LOS

SOME REMARKS AND PERSONAL NOTES:

A. Many sources list **EL ENMASCARADO DE PLATA** (René Cardona Sr., 1952) as Santo's first movie, but the notion is incorrect. The masked hero in that movie was **El Médico Asesino**, a character who also wore a silver mask very close in design to Santo's. Indeed, the similarity between the two silver-masked heroes is such that, three movies made in the 70s featuring **El Médico Asesino** — **LOS CAMPEONES JUSTICIEROS** (Federico Conde, 1970) — released in Italy as **CINQUE SUPERMEN CONTRO I NANI VENUTI DALLO SPAZIO**; **VUELVEN LOS CAMPEONES JUSTICIEROS** (Federico Conde, 1972) and **EL TRIUNFO DE LOS CAMPEONES JUSTICIEROS** (Rafael Lluneda, 1973) — are often listed as Santo filmographies. (Some materials on those movies alternately list **El Médico Asesino** as **El Fantasma Blanco**.) Curiously, the genuine Santo would later adopt a character in a film exhibited by **El Médico Asesino** in the original **EL ENMASCARADO DE PLATA** — the passing of mask uniforms and title from father to son, much like Lee Parks's *The Phantom*.

A. Again contrary to widespread custom, Santo did not appear in the classic **LADRON DE CADÁVERES** (Fernando Méndez, 1956). Santo's actual screen debut happened in the Mexican-Cuban chapea **CEREBRO DEL MAL**, shot in pre-revolutionary Havana in 1956. There he played second-banana to masked hero **El Indio** (played by Fernando Cárdenas, later a prolific writer of wrestling movies) and, when in jeopardy, he'd be generously rescued by the latter from the clutches of a brainwashing mad scientist. Santo got a better semi-look featuring in **CARGAMENTO BLANCO**, an offshore routine, non-fratney crime-adventure shot back-to-back with **CEREBRO...**, with which it shared much common footage. (For instance, both movies had identical closing scenes.) Those two titles remained unreleased for three years. In September 1960, Editorial Mexicana put out a 32-page weekly called Santo, **El Enmascarado de Plata**, comic book-style publication where the panels had photos of actors in action poses placed against painted backgrounds. The popularity of this magazine triggered the release of the two Mexican-Cuban films in 1961, their title changed to give prominence to the Man in the Silver Mask. That year Santo attacked a **WAVY ASHION OF THE ZOMBIES** came-out as the first true starring vehicle for Santo, establishing the basic formula for the series. It also marked the beginning of the long association of former Miss Mexico Lorena Velázquez with the wrestling/horror genre. And that's not a history.

A. **El Médico Asesino** was not the only masked wrestler with a close resemblance to Santo. There were also obvious imitations in name and spirit that had only one movie appearance each. Future superstar Jorge Rivera (real name, Jorge Poca) played **El Enmascarado de Oro** (*The Man in the Gold Mask*) in the television-film **EL ASESINO INVISIBLE**; **EL ENMASCARADO DE ORO CONTRA EL ASESINO INVISIBLE** (1964). And the redoubtable Loretta Vilaro (*The Golden Ring*) had an ally in **El Ángel** (*The Angel*) in the final *Wrestling Women* outing, fighting the vampire Panther Woman in **LAS MUJERES PANTERAS** (1966). Coincidentally, both films were directed by René Cardona Sr.

A. Many Santo movies were made as three-part serials in order to circumvent labor laws. To avoid the high costs of shooting at a studio affiliated with the official union STPC, producers of low-budget exploitation flicks often resorted to Estudios América (associated with the independent union STC) where rates were much cheaper. Estudios América, however, was notorious to the making of shorts and newsreels, so each of the five titles were pressed into production as three separate "shorts." Thus, for instance, the movie **SANTO CONTRA EL ESTRANGULADOR** was made in 25-minute

segments respectively entitled **Santo contra el Enroscador**, **La Patera Negra** and **El Fantasma del Teatro** and first shown in different days in subsequent releases (those installments were also combined into a single feature). (Many microcinemas have taken from the popular system. For instance, it has been common belief that the four "Nocturnus" features shown on U.S. TV — **THE CURSE OF NOCTURNUS**; **GENIE OF DARKNESS**; **MONSTER DEMOLEHER** and **BLOOD OF NOCTURNUS** — were American-made complete assemblies from a single, multi-part Mexican serial. In fact the four movies were originally conceived as more-or-less self-contained features, cut into three segments each as they went into production. It is true, however, that they resaw shot back-to-back August 1959 with the same cast and crew. They were respectively released as **LA MALICIÓN DE NOCTURNUS** (August 1961), **NOCTURNUS EL GENIO DE LAS TIENEBLAS** (December 1962), **NOCTURNUS Y EL DESTRUCTOR DE MONSTRUOS** (April 1962) and **LA SANGRE DE NOCTURNUS** (April 1963).

A. **"SANTO CONTRA LAS DIABÓLICAS"**, announced in 1960 to be directed by René Cardona Jr. was cancelled before completion. On the other hand, **PROFANADORES DE TUMBAS** and **SANTO CONTRA EL BARON BRACKLA** have often been referred to as being one and the same, but were in fact two distinct movies.

A. There was a general decline in quality in Santo movies with the introduction of color to the series (apparently with **OPERACIÓN 87**). The modest mystery man with simple needs, who probably earned his daily bread on the arena and devoted his spare time to fight evil, suddenly became a superscientist (in **SANTO EN EL TESORO DE DRACULA** he invented a time machine, no less) and an international secret agent — however secret one could be with that naïve of mask — who enjoys luxurious accommodations and adoring girls. That is, the blue-collar champion of the downtrodden moved up to the socioeconomic level of conventional bourgeois American superheroes — and became therefore less interesting. Moreover, the striking Gothic atmosphere of the best black-and-white entries was missing in most of the color cycle, with an occasional *Sesquise* flourish as the exception that proves the rule (like **SANTO EN LA VENGANZA DE LAS MUJERES VAMPIRO**).

A. In the late 60s and early 70s, "heavy" versions of wrestling horror movies were made for alternative markets. They were basically identical to the "regular", essentially adolescent-oriented versions of those films, with added footage of women with bare breasts and behinds — and were easily identifiable for the word **SEXED** in their respective titles. Thus we have **SANTO EN EL TESORO DE DRACULA** sexed-up as **EL VAMPIRO Y EL SEXO** and **SANTO CONTRA LOS JINETES DEL TERROR** as **LOS LEPROSOS Y EL SEXO**. Other similar non-Santomayoride titles include **LAS LUCHADORAS VS. EL ROBOT ASESINO** [i.e. **WRESTLING WOMEN VS. THE KILLER ROBOT**], alternatively released as **EL ASESINO LOCO Y EL SEXO**, and the infamous **LA HORRIBLE BESTIA HUMANA** whose "heavy" version **MORROR Y SEXO** enjoyed U.S. distribution as **NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES** (The clinical gore footage of the latter was also present in the "regular" version).

A. At least two Santo pictures made in the late 60s were thinly disguised remakes of earlier entries in the series. **SANTO Y EL DEMON EN EL MUNDO DE LOS MUERTOS** had a plot very similar to the earlier **SANTO EN EL MACHO DIBOLICO** with the Man in the Silver Mask time-tripping to Colonial Mexico to counter a curse against his own ancestor, but adding Bona Danton to the proceedings the second time around. Likewise, **SANTO EN LA VENGANZA DE LAS MUJERES VAMPIRO** was basically a revamped version of

SANTO EN ATACAN LAS BRUJAS, substituting vampire women and a Frankenstein monster for witches and the Lord of Darkness.

A. Santo's last hurrah was the unbelievably deranged **SANTO EN ATACAN LOS KATATECAS**, also released in a slightly different form as **EL PUÑO DE LA MUERTE**. In the subsequent two fold-out starring the son, Santo Sr., only appears briefly, proudly passing the baton to his less-than-chance male offspring with an appropriate auguration ceremony completely with the swearing of a solemn oath of office.

A. Santo and Blue Demon were featured in a widely-watched episode of the British TV program *Star of the Hourly Showcase Film Show* (1968) — all mail a fond homage, with a superbly edited selection of cuts from the series. However, host Jonathan Ross's contention that Santo "starred in over 150 films" is way off the mark.



A. There are even unauthorized Santo movies! The Turkish movie industry, already responsible for copyright-free-beleaguered domestic renditions of Flash Gordon and Star Trek, also put out a feature (date uncertain) exported as **3 SUPERMEN**, where Santo (I) teams up with Captain America (I) to fight anti-evil Spideeman (I). The mind-boggling confirmation, released on tape in France as **LES TROIS SUPERHOMMES** was characterized by French critic Laurent Cholier as "a straight-lace denotation of the so-called Marvel spirit" (Cineki 44, September 1988).

A. And last and certainly least, let's not forget the infamous Santo Gold-masked star of the earliest TV "horror movie" that played on UHF stations in the early 60s. These basically a scam pushing sales and franchise rights to a line of gold-plated titles in the loud and sleazy tradition of genre stars Robert Titterton, Richard Simmons or others. It deserves passing mention here because part of the ad showed some footage of masked wrestlers and costumed onlookers, described as "scenes from the incoming space wrestling movie **BLOOD CIRCUS**" — the existence of which is highly doubtful.

(Thanks to Jen A. Johnson (Zotter, the Magazine from Venice), Michael Secula, Dan Pydytkowsky — and indirectly to Emilio Garcia Riera, Michel Ferrière & Laurent Cholier (Cineki), Lucas Balbo, Steve Fichetto, Luis Garcia, Fernando Ayala and Procinemas. Additional information and eventual corrections are welcome and appreciated.)

DAIKAIJŪ BARAN

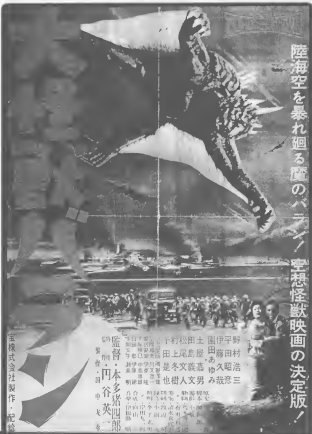
(GIANT MONSTER VARANI)

Barring the kōdai and DAIGORŌ VS. GOLIATH / KAIJŪ DAIFUNSEN DAIGORŌ TAI GORIASU (Toshihiro Iijima 1972) **DAIKAIJŪ BARAN** is probably the last well-known of all Toho giant monster movies. While not a particularly remarkable example of the genre, it is notable for the simple fact that among all its peers, this is the film most radically modified for its American release. The two versions of **GOLIAH** (1954 and 1984) were dubbed in the U.S. and re-edited with insert shots featuring Raymond Burr, though there were significant changes in tone and approach in those Americanized forms; this plotline of the latter remained more or less faithful to their respective originals. The movie known here as **VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE**, however, threw away the original script and opted for a completely different story written around the monster footage salvaged from the original. I know of no review published in the Western hemisphere that deals with the Japanese version of the film, so here is one such contribution.

DAIKAIJŪ BARAN opens with a peculiar sequence showing a laborious countdown and blast-off of a spacecraft. Meanwhile are venturing into solving the mysteries of outer space" postulates the narrator, "let us not ignore the mysteries set to be explained in this earth." The scene shifts to a biological laboratory in Tokyo, where elderly Dr. Sugimoto explains to the audience that some schoolchildren caught in a summer trip to the mountains of Tôhoku (northern Honshû), an example of a rare species of a Pannaceous butterfly, "found

only in Tôhoku." This prompts him to send assistants Shingo and Wada to the region to look for more specimens of the Siberian insect. In a village at the Kitakami River overlooks the two city sisters hear stories of those only Baranag, Seriya Mountain God Baranag, who is supposedly lies asleep in the bottom of an uncharted mountain covered lake nearby. They discuss the locals' tale, move into the Mountain God's sacred shrine and manage to collect another specimen of the butterfly. But the intruders assistants would never return with their find, as they are squashed to death by some unseen force.

Shingo's sister Yuriko, a newspaper reporter, decides to investigate the disappearance of her brother, as well as what the mysterious Mountain God really is. She proceeds to Tôhoku in the company of Dr. Uozaki, another of Sugimoto's assistants, and bumbling photographer Hôguchi. (The latter is a comic-relief character of the most risqué/able kind, one who seriously impacts the pace of the story.) In the mountain village, they hear from a slightly unbalanced priest that Heged Baranag punishes anybody who dares tread into his domain—an account vehemently challenged by know-it-all Uozaki. An



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その他・田中辰雄

!skatefish could already in the original identified its entomology books as Pannaceous bromner a species of butterfly widespread in central and northern Japan (Academically that conclusively dispels the old erroneous myth readers of this magazine have been hearing; reports!)

enraged monster into Saratoga surf by a village boy in search of his missing dog causes some uneasiness — and Ucoho, who almost persecuted the villagers to drop their superstitious beliefs, is forced to swallow his words when a huge spray headed reptilian creature emerges from the lake and demolishes everything. Ucoho recognizes the monster as a *Manowar*, “a dinosaur from the Mesozoic” and for no particular reason calls the creature *Vari* (which he later learned was a misspelling of *Varan*). He is convinced the creature would cause incalculable damage if it reaches large cities — and — is and — he told. Behind him a series of coming destructions by leveling the village. (The damaged priest is one of the first to go meet his creator.)

In Tokyo, Dr. Sugimoto confirms the beast is a dinosaur that lived “through the Jurassic and the Cretaceous” and endorses Ucoho’s concern about its coming to attack the metropolis. With his assent, considerable military resources are deployed to the mountains. Tanks surround the lake and depth charges are tossed into the water. The monster comes out and, as expected by the audience, is completely impervious to heavy artillery. In the ensuing panic, Yuriko and Ucoho are trapped in a cave with Vanemitting outide. Sugimoto who concedes the creature is indestructible, suggests they draw it away with lures. “Ink animals are attracted to bright lights,” the book writes, but fish also react to a lured fish. Vaner enters the lured pond, swims a few minutes back and — much to the glee of the viewer of a flying squirrel — and stays off. The shocked scientists and soldiers watch helplessly as the monster flies away.

The Defense Ministry studies its options: Dr. Fujiwara, a chemical apparently cozy with the military industrial complex, is confident there are new projectiles capable of “penetrating 50-centimeter steel walls” and no living creature could possibly have such a thick skin anyway. Sugimoto is less optimistic because *Varan* “lives on moist earth,” has delicate Umayna organs, and believes the monster’s invulnerability comes not from having hard armor (heaven knows) but from the elastic properties of its loose skin that can absorb the impact of cannon shells. While this academic debate goes on, Vaner makes an appearance in the middle of Tokyo Bay and sinks a fishing boat. The Naval Defense Force sends patrol bombers to launch a missile attack, while the fleet groups in a blockade formation. All this military escalation is useless, naturally, and the monster monster lurches toward the Harbin International Airport. The top brass decide to try Dr. Fujiwara’s new experimental super-explosive — although they are not sure how to use it effectively, since it would require boring a hole in Vaner’s hide for its application. Believing the belly of the creature should be comparatively more vulnerable, a team led with his super-explosives prepared and Ucoho himself drives a night underground to the monster’s lair. Vaner suffers the impact of the explosion but recovers and proceeds to attack, causing tremendous devastation. Suddenly Sugimoto has an inspired idea when he sees the monster swallowing a signal flare to kill from inside. Flares attached to sonic fired with the super-explosives are paraded. Vaner takes the bait and gobbles up time such containers. Two of them explode in his time, forcing the creature to retreat to the ocean. There a third outbreak looks off to its destruction. The monster has the final word in the *Red Starling* tradition: “We have an expression for you... analysis experts. For a moment, *Varan* made his mystery tangible to us, only to take it away from our grasp once again, dropped into the waters of Tokyo Bay.”

* Respectively *Barnobodo* and *Barnobodo* (a language without “u” sounds. There is no dinosaur with that name — in Japanese — although some dinosaurs have the “u” sound. “Barnobodo” in 1954 and 1959 have been called *Varanobodo* and *Varanobodo*, respectively. “Barnobodo” most probably refers to Japanese, a genus comprising 28 living forms of monitor lizards including the 10m-long Komodo Dragon. (Information courtesy of the Institute for Advanced Haplogroup Studies, a division of The Monoclonal Antibody Foundation, a branch of the National Academy of Science.)

Cute definitely a lesser entry in the Toho science fiction cycle *VARAN* gets like a poor cousin to previous and still-to-come glories of the genre. To begin with and coming after the genre has been established triumph of *RODAN THE MYSTERIANS* and *THE HUMAN* (its black and white offering has all the earmarks of a trashy Bop. The script is lame, the little creature under the main cast weak, and there is too much repeated action (Well it may hold the distinction of having been the first “juicy” *Kappi* episode to be shown in Japan — a bonus that almost to become the standard in Japanese feature films — though the Americanized *GOZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS* opens with Raymond Burr was released the year before in censored pseudo-Godzilla form (Japanese subtitles). There are a few puns, however. Vaner’s design is unimpaired — it looks like an iguana with spikes on its back — but the *mondo* (Toho) team makes intelligent use of it in the outstretched screen space: the beast is most of the times quadrupedal and turns around which is left and sweeps the scenery across the width of the frame so the actor always develops horizontally, not from back to front. Although a good chunk of the military operations footage comes from *GOZILLA* and is reused *GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER* (properly cropped above and below the frame to fit the widescreen format), most of the newly shot destruction scenes are of a high standard, with impressive use of mountains and water effects. The movie also benefits from a thunderous typically grandiose score by Kurosawa — which one of the most recognizable as the precursor to his own main theme for *GIANT*, *THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER*, mixed with the famous “perpetual” theme for *KING OF THE MONSTERS* and *GOZILLA*.

VARAN marked the debut of screenwriter Shinji Sekizawa in the Toho movie series. Born in Kyoto in 1920, Sekizawa produced animated cartoons before being drafted and sent to the front with the Imperial Army in World War II. He returned the film industry in 1948, worked as assistant and occasional writer for veteran director Hiroshi Shimizu for 6 years, and eventually ended up writing and helping an independent science fiction producer, SORAGU ENBAI KUYO SHIMIZU (Flying Saucers: Horror Attack, 1950) — he is directorial work. He then signed with Toho Films and soon his name became inextricably associated with giant monster movie scripts, being attached the great majority of the space 1958 genre classics. Sekizawa also had a successful parallel career as a writer of pulp fiction, and a well-known model car collector and enthusiast.

But Sekizawa’s script for *VARAN* is poorly developed, full of inconsistencies and loose ends, a far cry from the balance and elegance of, say *RODAN* or *GOZILLA VS. THE THING*. Consider the whole business about the rare beetle it proves to be absolutely superfluous, as there is only a fairly feeble hint of its existence being part of the background and getting snuffed. The obvious possibility — that a prehistoric ecological/geological connection between Sōma and the Tōhoku region could indicate the existence of other *Varan*’s still lurking around in both Japan and Russia — is never picked up by anybody. The storyline is also full of logical holes. For instance, how did Yuriko get to know about the Mountain God if the only offspring that heard about his dad before he returned to Tokyo? And the characters jump to conclusions with the blind, needless haste of a Porsche driver. Consider the following exchange that takes place when the main characters have their first glimpses of the monster:

BOHUGUCHI: It looks like the grandchild of all beasts! What the hell is it?

UOZAKI (looking with binoculars): *Varanobodo* — It’s a *Varan*!

BOHUGUCHI: *Varan*?

UOZAKI: A dinosaur from the Mesozoic Era.

That such a beast could still be alive today — it’s unbelievable!

YURIKO: Yet we are seeing *Varan* before our very eyes! So my brother and his friend lost their lives to it!

UOZAKI: Exactly. It will be a disaster if it reaches the big city. Let’s go.

The dialogue is compact but hardly swiftness. Not only does it with astonishing speed and little hesitation, precisely describes a creature no human being presumably had seen before, but also gives us a storm for good reference. (Do dinosaurs have skeletons for their bodies?) Then, with no evidence whatsoever, Yuriko promptly deduces her brother and his companion are dead and *Varan* is responsible. (Show us right of course.) Ucoho is obviously wrong, but that’s already decided it may get to metropolitan areas. (Either he must be an expert on the dinosaur or a behavior of dinosaurs or either of them is a paleontologist or a biologist.) And when it is shown that it will be perfect in the (Hiroshima) TV series, it was the emergence of a unique scientific discovery, preferring to test it quickly send it up to long-term tests.

Another shortcoming of the plot is that the monster’s attack patterns follow no rhyme or reason. Nothing explains what made it decide to go off the lake and attack the village at that particular moment (was that boy a rancher who shot dogs, such a sacrifice *Varan* had to intervene?), much less why it went to Tokyo Bay and do an about-face and descend upon the Harbin Airport. Once safe in the ocean (provided it can withstand salt water, of course), why should it risk attacking half of the Japanese fleet plus the busy airport — other than to make the movie gratuitously exciting with a double-header demolition derby? (Even the Giant Class had a better rationale for its attacks.)

The main cast is also as bland as the characters played. Ever relative given, come like Akiko Hara, Fuyuki Murakami, Yoko Tachibana and Yoshiko Taira are wasted in small cameos parts while hero Kōji Nomura is such a colorless lead he would never again play other than glorified extras in subsequent genre films. The most disappointing performance is Kōji Nomura, who would later play in *BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE* (the role of Dr. Adams, the scientist previously portrayed by Tachibana in *THE MYSTERIANS*). It is interesting to compare Senda Dr. Sugimoto with Toho’s former chief paleontologist, Shimura Dr. Yamane from *GOZILLA* and *GIGANTIS*. Shimura may be more scientifically accurate when he dates the period comprising the Jurassic and the Cretaceous at “roughly 185 to 160 million years ago.” Yamane in the original *GOZILLA* was off of the mark by some 80 to 120 million years. Senda Shimura was clearly superior, delivering his jargon-filled lines with measured authority, adding well-observed human touches (i.e. the moment when he adjusts his tie in the middle of a lecture) and expressing his anguish when torn between his lifetime work and the suffering of his fellow men. Actor Senda, however, is obviously reading his technical gobbledegook from cue cards and doesn’t seem to understand what the hell he is talking about. (Curiously, he breaks down the fourth wall and addresses the audience on scene, then he gets back into the story and stays there.) His immediate reaction at the first sight of the monster is typical of his scientifically negative spirit: “It’s horrible! Official Kōji Nomura, you must make sure it won’t escape!” With scientists like the who needs generals or exterminators?

Two recurrent themes show up time and again in Toho monster films. One is a sense of vulnerability of Japan as a nation defeated in World War II and annihilated by American occupation. Those movies always revolved in showing hows, gathering tanks rolling, destroyers converging, bombers strafing, missiles being fired, nuclear bombs dropping — invariably accompanied by Akira Kurosawa’s storming machines — all with

...and while we're at it, why not compare and contrast with—

VARAN

THE UNBELIEVABLE

(THE U.S. VERSION)

The plot of **VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE** is so different from Shirohito Sakuragi's script that it deserves mention here. Two of the discrepancies between the versions are real shockers. First, incredible as it may seem, the story doesn't take place in Japan, but in Kuroshio shima, a fictitious island under Japanese jurisdiction. The metropolis attacked by the monster is not Tokyo any more, but Onda City, the island's largest town, which makes the story structure less awkward for now the creature hops from the lake into the ocean and swims around the island — which, being presumably much smaller than Japan, makes its onslaught pattern more credible than the arbitrary actions of the original. Second, and even more surprisingly, the word "Varan" is never mentioned anywhere in the movie. The creature is at one point referred to as "Obake" — in fact a generic term in Japanese for ghostly apparitions — so the American title makes no sense at all.

The English language version centers on a certain Operation Shokuba, a chemical decontamination experiment performed in a saltwater lake in the middle of Kuroshio shima by U.S. Navy commander James Bradley. The test involves deliberate contamination of the lake and the local population must be evacuated, causing the loyal Japanese wife Anna concern for her own image as a foreigner. Heijungin is a Captain Kato, a liaison officer who's ready to bring bones from the mainland (if such is the word for Japan) to break the evacuation if necessary. The natives are restless because they fear the coming of Obake, a creature they worship and believe to be asleep on the bottom of the lake. "Obake was their word for prehistoric reptile" explains Bradley in narration, somehow forcing the locals have full understanding of the conceptual definition of a prehistoric reptile. "According to the legend" continues Bradley, "if effects of my experiment were harmful, the monster would awaken and oust the war and destroy the world." (So it looks like the legend predicted the possibility of harmful experiments being conducted some day — quite an astounding prophecy, considering.) Tradition proves accurate

for a huge monster emerges and attacks the surrounding evacuation troops. In a scene parallel to the similar one in the original movie, Bradley, Anna, and Kato are stranded inside a cave and threatened by the creature, who is ultimately distracted by signal flares. Obake (who doesn't fly at all) then proceeds toward the Onda City airport, invisible as ever. The climax reveals the methods used in the original to kill the monster. There is no super-explosive involved, and the perched-on-ventures that finally do Varan in here are only dissonant fumes. But Uccala, run with the explosive-laden truck is recycled as the final blow to Obake, an operation more or less telegraphed by Bradley's suggestions.

Apart from the "shockers" mentioned above, what's unique about the example of *Americanization* is the shift in perspective from the objective narrative (aside from Dr. Sugimoto's brief intervention) of the original, to the documentary style first person account centered on the Bradley character. Although he and his wife spend the entire story in and around their house near the lake, somehow he is on top of everything that happens elsewhere even being mentioned in the execution of the bestial climax he does not witness in person. Bradley is your typical Cap'n Kirk-like Ugly American, not really despicable, but somewhat crass and little aware of local sensitivities. (In those politically incorrect times, the kind of hero was supposed to be cheered by the audience.) The Japanese characters — all played by American New actors — are apparently white males, crowd expected. Anna is the sweet, docile stands by her man Japanese wife, the kind we see nowadays in personal ads featuring prospective Filipino brides for lonely, financially-secure American gents. (She'd rather have Bradley's apartment be carried out somewhere else, less because the locals are upset than for the bed, given her husband's getting in Tokyo circles. Later she has a guilt trip, imagining the monster attack only happened after her husband changed his plans to please her. What a perfect wife!) Captain Kato, despite talking above Bradley in the military hierarchy, is treated by the latter as a junior ideologue — he's supposed to be in charge of local operations, yet our Ugly American continuously berates him, never ceasing to shout him orders left and right. Then we have a local boy named Matsuo, who throws an occasional "Ah-so" while proving Americanized enough to be cute, telling his monster master to "your American helicopter" and ordering a signal "Yes, sir!" In the prior of promises, it is no surprise the original cast remains in the background throughout the movie, their actions narrated from Bradley's viewpoint. (This also does away with the cost of translation and dubbing.) So the ill-fated scientists, Wade and Shogami, turned into nameless government officials who, at Bradley's suggestion, came from Japan to persuade the islanders to leave the lake



surroundings. The two principals, Uccala and Yuriko, are now recast as Paul and Chelon Aiso, friends of the Bradleys, and both journalists who came to the island to check on the Obake story, though the two couples never meet in the Americanized office's extended every move the Japanese pair makes. Rather than a photographer Hong-ach and scientist Sugimoto's body is now a chemist.

The Dallas Productions shot scenes are not nearly as historical as the Raymond Burr footage for *GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS*; the sets are minimal — kitchen, dining room, a field table and a jeep — and all Bradley has for "scientific equipment" are half a dozen test tubes in a toylike island. Some creative cheating, a dose with the original budget, the Mountain God ritual performed by the village's priest (with exactly one choral Aiso flubbed in there), all the rest of the soundtrack having been replaced by library music, is deconstructed as some mumble-jumble designed to scare Bradley away, and the depth charges fired in the lake are a subtle "artificial chemistry" (Our naval officer surely has to sound "scientific." What deaf fish come up to the surface after the experiment begins, Bradley solemnly reports. There's a useful reference to the artificial chemistry has toxic effect on fish.)

Probably for ambience, some Japanese dialogue was included in the version. Most of it consisted of a radio voice shouting Japanese coordinates, taped over and again from the original soundtrack. In a couple of places, hand-drawn instructions and acknowledgments, possibly by Japanese American actors, are also heard. (Many of the Nisei cast members listed in the credits do not appear on the screen as I presume they played radio voices.) On the other hand, the lines in Japanese spoken by Captain Kato seem ad libbed by actor Clifford Kawada, and are wholly inappropriate as military jargon or hierarchical phrasemology. They are also kept very simple — he spends a lot of time just asking over the radio if the other party can hear him — and whenever the dialogue threatens to turn a little more complicated, they are conveniently muffled by Bradley's voice-over explanation of what's going on.

The movie ends in a little coda scene to be savored by dehard monster fans. After Obake is destroyed, Commander Bradley decides to abandon his experiments in the island, only to get an offer to continue them in a certain bay (southwest lake) in Southern California. I'd love to see his decision methods being back **THE MONSTER THAT CHALLENGED THE WORLD**

² In the American dialogue, that is. Someone ears can pick up the word Varan in at least one scene, as part of the original soundtrack left untranslated and used for background effect.

VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE. Dallas Productions (USA), 1961. Director / producer: Jerry A. Berewitz. Screenplay: Sid Harris. Cinematography: Jack [also billed as 'Jacques'] Marquette. Music: [uncredited library cuts]. Film editors: Jack Ruggiero (supervision), Ralph Cushman. Photographic effects: Howard A. Anderson Co., Property master: Sam Harris, Makeup: Robert Cowen. Costumes: Robert Odell. Sound: Glen Glenn Sound Co.; Victor Appel (mixer). Sound effects editor: Kurt Hermsfeld. Music editor: Peter Zinner. Assistant director: Leonard Kunody. Script supervisor: Margaret Lawrence. Cast: Myron Healy (Commander James Bradley), Tsunoko Kobayashi (Anne Bradley), Clifford Kawada (Capt. Kishi), Denick Shimatsu (Matsu), Hideo Imamura, George Sasaki, Hiroshi Hisamune, Yoneo Iguchi, Michael Sung, Roy K. Ogata. Standard format, black and white. Running time: 70 minutes. A Cory Film Corporation presentation, released by Crown International Pictures (1962).

NO PARTICIPATION OF A JAPANESE CAST OR CREW IS ACKNOWLEDGED.

INFORMATION UPDATE

△ The Travelling Monster Hunter reviews are usually long in plot description — some say too much — because the movies described are either rare or not available in English. It is the belief of this column that full understanding of the film storyline is essential for the better appreciation of those films, hopefully leading to pointers that help understand the culture they portray or were engendered by. Some titles covered in the last issue have since been made available in this country, so readers can evaluate them for themselves. For instance, by the time this issue hits the stores, George Melford's Spanish-language version of **DRACULA** should be out on pre-recorded video, with subtitles. Those fortunate enough to receive advance copies (not us) have attested this MCA-Universal release does include the infamous in-swing third reel (with those startling, ferocious vampire women) and runs 104 minutes. If the running time is correct, it should confirm our speculation that, at one time in the 30s, there were possibly two **DRACULAs** simultaneously playing in different theaters in L.A., the Spanish-language version being practically half an hour longer than the more famous Browning/Lugosi classic.

△ Still on the subject of the Count: Carlos Vilaras, the Spanish-speaking vampire, was later typecast in sinister roles, more or less like his Hungarian counterpart. He was active in Mexico in the mid-30s, and played an unconventional scientist in the horror melodrama **EL MISTERIO DEL ROSTRO PALIDO** (Juan Bustillo Oro, 1935), the title role in **NOSTRADAMUS** (Juan Bustillo Oro & Antonio Hela, 1936), and a never aging mad doc with a pet monster in the semi-humorous **EL**

SUPERLOCO (Juan José Segura, 1936). (More on the latter, and other obscure international pre-WWII creature features in a future special edition of TMH.)

△ Other TMH subjects available on video: Smiler Cinema (PO Box 4369 Dept. C, Medford, OR 97501-0166) released an English-dubbed, black and white print of **THE SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN**, their literature suggests the Telegian of the title is the name of the "vengeful madman", although no such monster occurs in the original version. **BAT WOMAN** will come out around December in a subtitled release from Zentaron International Pictures (29 Darling St. #2, Boston MA 02120), complemented by choice cuts from the outrageous Filipino ripoff **ALYAS BATMAN EN ROBIN** (Tony Y. Reyes, 1990).

△ Outstanding film expert Max Della Mora informs that **THE GOLDEN BAT** was, contrary to last report, actually shown outside Japan: at least it played in Italy, under the title **IL RITORNO DI DIAVOLIK** (sic). Further investigation revealed that the Italian print had a spurious cast list ("Thomas Lee", "Deborah Scott", "Peter Conway"); direction was attributed to a certain "Terence Marvo Jr.", which is apparently an umbrella name used for different Toei productions released in Italy. Other movies credited to "Marvin Jr." include **L'ASTRONAVE FANTASMA** (**INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN / UCHU DAISOKUSEN** — directed by Koji Ohta, 1961) and **SEXFOBIA, L'AGUNGLA SESSUALE / SEX PHOBIA / MARUHI SEKKUSU KYOFUSHO** — Ryuchi Takamori, 1970).

△ More on director Hajime Sato. In 1963 he shot **WONDERFUL EGYPT**, a documentary in English for the Egyptian Tourism Board. An author of short stories and essays, Sato published in 1968 a three-part collection of his writings, with the title **Said Hajime Kaisokuho, Kōkoku to Fuan** ("The Memoirs of Hajime Sato: Jubilation and Anxiety").

△ The original title of the movie reviewed in **MONSTER INTERNATIONAL #1** as **GUTS OF A VIRGIN** is actually **BIJO NO HARAWATA** ("Entrails of a Beautiful Woman") and not as printed. Here are the correct credits for that flick.

BIJO NO HARAWATA Rokugatsu-Gekijō (Japan, 1986). Director/supervisor: Gakra (= Kazuo Komatsu). Cinematography: Eichi Ohazawa. Music / art director [not credited]: Film editor: J.K.S. [sic]. Lighting: Shunji Tambo. Assistant director: Yoichi Okada. Producers: Matsuo Sato & Hiroshi Harazawa. Associate producer: Koji Taniguchi. Cast: Megumi Shiori, Kurumi Jogenji, Misa Nakahara, Rei Hase. Color. Running time: 69 minutes. Distribution: Nikkatsu. Release date: September 23, 1986.

SHOJO NO HARAWATA, which literally translates as "Entrails of a Virgin" — hence the confusion — refers to a different film, reviewed elsewhere in the current issue.

△ In the review of Tullio Demicheli's **ASSIGNMENT TERROR**, an editorial typo stated its star Michael Remme was featured in Roger Corman's **DAY THE WORLD ENDED**, when, in fact, he didn't battle a three-eyed mutant in that film, but came to Earth in peace with his robot Gort in Robert Wise's **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL**.

Every issue of **MONSTER INTERNATIONAL** is open for review and correction. Don't hesitate to catch us on our errors, it'll make for a better magazine in the long run.



CROCODILE SHOCK!



ITALIAN GUNS, GUTS & GATORS EXAMINED BY ERIC SULEV

Who the hell wants to be eaten alive? Certainly not me, and apparently not does a good part of the movie-watching world either, or else we wouldn't have all these films in which enormous monsters in the water are more than happy to gnaw munch upon, and eventually digest, our soft pink bodies. It seems that in recent years, our friends the Italians have once again resurrected cannibalistic beasts from the watery depths to feast upon us, even when such monsters are out of vogue with the movie-going public. Who wants monster animals when science and technology has filled our screens with Terminators, Aliens, and Predators, all of whom are more than happy to do us in with their advanced methods of death? Thankfully for those of us who would prefer to see human damage caused by aquatic horrors with big teeth, these crazy Italians refuse to let the JAWS rip-offs die off, and have once again tried to create an equal to Spielberg's 1975 creation.

Realizing that the legal problems encountered by the producers of **L'UTIMO SQUALO** (a somewhat amusing picture starring James Franciscus and directed by Elio G. Castellani that completely rips-off Spielberg's film — a fact that Universal Pictures and their lawyers also quickly noticed) **KILLER CROCODILE** producer Fabrizio De Angelis chose to follow in the footsteps of Sergio Martino's 1970 effort **IL FUME DEL GRANDE CAIMANO** (known to American viewers as **THE GREAT ALLIGATOR**). Also influencing De Angelis' decision was probably the fact that Joe D'Amato's 1987 monster-shark-mess **DEEP BLOOD** is a horrible (it even shook the confidence of *Amos & Morris* fans everywhere, who have jet-apart shot over the years, but nothing ever quite so painful as this sinking loser

For those who seem to have missed Martino's ground-breaking film, its highly innovative plot deals with a money-grubbing land developer (Mel Ferrer) who has built a vacation paradise in the remote tropical setting, even though he has been warned about the hostile native's resident god, a (surprise!) monster alligator. Although the alligator appears to have been created by taking a log and drawing two eyes and several bumps along it, then dragging it behind a boat, the feisty critter does manage to get a few good bites in before being blown to bits by some carefully lobbed dynamite. Despite its stumbling pace, **ALLIGATOR** does offer a few good moments, and it's worth a watch to anyone interested in low-budget Italian horror, or simply those who just prefer to see Barbara Bach get soaked while prancing around in a white outfit.

Surprisingly De Angelis' 1988 production **KILLER CROCODILE** actually improves on the groundwork laid out by Martino's spurious reptile. Using a tropical Caribbean setting where life is cheap and money goes far, director Larry Ludy (actually producer De Angelis' pseudonym) has a group of ecological investigative journalists travel along the Isabella River and swear to scientists whether or not the rumors of nuclear waste being dumped in the swampy area are true. Some they're true, because why else would Concetta (Sherina Rose) and her yelping poochie Candy get munched by a huge crocodile when the group stops and camps for its first night? Obviously the croc has been gorging itself on the glowing waste because it has now grown to about forty or fifty feet long. After discovering Concetta's grisly remains, the group sails back to the local village only to have



the crocodile follow them back so that it can ravage a little girl whose doll has fallen in the water. In the film's most impressive scene, the crocodile nips apart the docks and munches on anyone trying to save the little girl who is trapped on the up-ended dock. De Angelis throws in the guy details until local bee-hunter Joe (Thomas Mooki) dives the beast away with several shots from his high-powered rifle.

It turns out that Joe has met up with the croc before and has the scars to prove it. Looking for a rematch, he gets Kaven (Anthony Criminali, Mark, and Bob to come along with him to finish off the monster once and for all. Bob doesn't last too much longer at all, and when the crocodile smashes her boat to bits, he's the lucky one who lands in the rapids' mouth. Mark, who is miffed about the expensive camera that went down the monster's throat, is more concerned about the fact that he won't be able to get a good picture of the beast, rather than the fate of his friend.

While nursing their wounds, the group rests at Joe's jungle retreat. Unbeknownst to them, local wealthy businessman "The Judge" and his cronies who have been making money by allowing the dumping of the waste into the river and swamp journey into the area to try and feed the beast before someone else does. Unfortunately for them (and luckily for us), they too run afoul of the crocodile, and the Judge even manages to get his arm torn off, and leave his bloody stump around before he sinks to his watery grave. Seeing the explosion of the man's bloody boat, Joe and the boys quickly head over, only to have Joe single-handedly take on the killer crocodile and be dragged down when the creature dives below the water's surface.

Disappointed over the fact that the only person who really knew that they were doing a good job, Kaven drifts aimlessly in his boat, only to discover that Joe really isn't dead! Maybe he's a little bit, but at least he's still among the living. This turns out to be a good thing because the crocodile re-emerges for its final attack, and following Joe's instructions, Kaven tosses a running outboard motor into the monster's mouth which tears up much of the croc's insides before somehow blowing up, killing the creature with it.

Let's face it: **KILLER CROCODILE** is not just dumb, but highly ridiculous as well! Are we really supposed to swallow these implausible hook, line and sinker? Sure we are, or else we wouldn't have chosen to watch a film called **KILLER CROCODILE** in the first place. To De Angelis and his crew's credit, the film moves along well even when viewed in Italian. The gory crocodile attack set pieces although roughly-directed still deliver the goods, and are exciting enough to warrant a second look. Finally, Giametto De Rosa's creature turned out very effectively and looks nowhere as ridiculous as the creature in *Mad Max's* film. Surprisingly impressive and imposing are

the words that best describe the creature, a job well done Giametto! The only real disappointing feature was Ric Orlan's dramatic score, which was clearly influenced by... you guessed it, *JAWS*. If you haven't figured it out by now, **KILLER CROCODILE** is recommended for those who don't want to see their brain cells too highly, and are looking for cheap thrills, Italian monster style. In addition, part one is infinitely better than the atypical sequel **KILLER CROCODILE 2**.

Given the chance to direct the 1995 feature, make-up and effects man Giametto De Rosa must not have done a good job, or his time and money must have been severely limited. A shameless rehash of part one, the sequel manages to be more rapid, while at the same time less entertaining. Padded with highlights from the first film, in the form of Kaven's flashbacks as he hunts down a second crocodile hatched from the egg(s) by the first one, the sequel is shameless in its lack of new ideas and directions. Throwing in an obnoxious investigative reporter, Lisa Pitt, who is following up whether or not the owner of a new luxury vacation spot has really found the missing nuclear waste from the first film before opening his resort does nothing to cover up the fact that the film has no brains, no imagination, and no hope.

When Kaven is sent down to help Lisa, he spends no time in enlisting the help of Joe who remains unconscious (that there is yet another giant crocodile. Nevertheless, Joe's disbelief is shattered when he becomes the last major victim of the monster. After endless scenes of Kaven's adoring around, he finally kills the beast by lobbing some dynamite into its mouth. De Rosa makes the conclusion less engaging by using the same "crocodile blows up" footage from the first film! To make matters even worse, the footage (in its actual context) has already been used at the beginning of the film as a pre-credit prologue! Who do these guys think they're looking? Other than a scene where a surprising number of little kids and their nuns supervisors get chewed up by the monster, and dialogue much as "but when I take off my bathing suit I feel naked." **KILLER CROCODILE 2** is a complete waste of time. Sorry Gino, try again.

While **KILLER CROCODILE** was something of a step in the right direction for the Italian monster community, its sequel was definitely two steps back. It would be nice to see that perhaps in the future, these monster night-makers developing some ideas on their own and won't have to plunder films like *THE GREAT ALLIGATOR* for inspiration. I realize that both the world film market and budgetary restrictions are against them, but those Italian film crews are really and talented in their own peculiar way. They've done it before and they'll do it again. I know they can.



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REVIEWS

ENTRALS OF A VIRGIN

A MUSKY MONSTER MOVIE,
TACTFULLY REVIEWED BY JEFF SEGAL

Available on Japanese loanwords without the pleasurable of English subtitles, director Goro (aka Kazuo Komizu) **SHOJO NO HARAWATA/ENTRALS OF A VIRGIN** will make an impression on bilingual viewers. However, the movie owes as much inspiration to North American slugs and clams as it does to fellow trading Japanese cinema. The hybrid elements are used with an explicitness that transcends language barriers.

These Japanese couples fresh what appears to be an erotic fashion photograph. They are perched atop a mountain. The young women daydream about their intergroup sexual encounters. Extended love scenes follow, including a tasty assortment of feminine masturbation, tatsoo and slow massages. Though it wades overworldly, the film leaves very little carnality to the imagination. Onscreen logging and careful camera placement do not obscure explicit non-genital, although very soggy scenes. These moments forecast the later horror which is to come. The movie means promise as strong as the sex.

Afterward, the crew is moving along mountain made in a barren, icy, barren landscape. The synthesized ominous score, which is the footage and future scenes of a new Japanese film, European.

Many night scenes in the trailers. Most darkness is filled by the vehicle's headlights into jewels of condensation. This particular set-up is a self-indulgent Japanese in its colorful execution. Otherwise, **ENTRALS OF A VIRGIN** is told very straightforwardly.

In a nearby woodland, something rises. The mud-colored being stalks and lunges into the night. The van's driver is startled when huge mossy bounces out the forest against the windshield. The intruder disappears.

The shaman-travellers call it a night and park in an unmarked huddle of bushes. Something quietly dogs them, setting up a situation which will be nostalgic for fans of slasher movie or **SHINOBU NO YAMA** (or **THE SPIRIT TRAP**, a less ill-fated Japanese giallo that related to cast with a supernatural tale). In a horror-horror movie fashion, the camera slides through underbrush, adopting a point-of-view equally subjective and menacing.

After the expected suspense-heightening tour of the grounds, the spider settles in an illuminated room. They demand entertainment. A man steps off his shirt and scoops up one of the girls. After ripping her shirt, he starts hating the peeping lady. She is then comforted until her bladder booms in a flood of urine. The man drops her semiconscious to the floor. The others splash for tender loving care.

The monster outside peers through smudged windows. It comes/leaves its peltor with snarls of mud. While double-checking the fellow who abandoned the girls, she encounters the intruder. They both pose. A hotto sticks a stone-headed ant. Repeating images of a hammer smashing a blunt of brain across the screen before the helter takes in the fellow's skull, bursting a heavy eyeball from its socket.

While **GUTS OF A VIRGIN** seemed to monitor the final few movies, **ENTRALS** shows a creature who dominates the running time. The casting enhances the later film's bizarre mood.

A young couple is engaged in sex, outside of a building. Groggily beneath his spectacles, the man chases the girl with probing fingers and painful bites. He recaptures the fleeing woman and forces her into mutual oral copulation. After he is satisfied he drops the girl, who in turn coolets up a globular wet and upon regaining her composure, runs into the night.

The opportunistic monster grabs the woman and rapes her. The scene is stretched out over a dark silhouette. The well-lit pants ejaculate spills down her legs. The thing that leaves the woman sprawled atop a bonnet. Unfortunately, a sprigged overhead sign, gutting her with a knife across the neck. The lowering terror confronts her. Again, vomit and skin peels. As he holds a knife of parts unknown, the man, frozen on a gravel base, he made earlier in life. The creature launches a huge spear that rips **ONEN**-style through the target's shoulders and torso.

The final couple consummate their coitus inside the building when they are interrupted by the twisted half-naked girl. She defers outside. The monster watches her embrace a pegged tree in a damaged hut. She talks alongside the first woman's head and laughs playfully.

The frustrated lovers are again disturbed when their giggling companion walks in on them. The story head she comes has a wound to the mouth and drops from the neck stasis. The lovely lover takes her gift sent to the couple. His partner laments and he leaves her simulates him to chase the unmarked guest outside. He is walking over a game court when lights flare on. He **PRIDE** (1987) (1987). The fellows pelted by garbage and safe. A crosser drops around his throat, throttling him. The demerol girl assaults him with warm copas. After she leaves the best approach, the body and cracks off two of the creature's fingers.

Writing on the floorboards of a shed, the crazy woman moans in hysterical agony. She eyeballs a severed arm lying nearby and manipulates two of its suffering fingers and plunges the hand deep inside herself. The monster across the shed and steps over its prey. She stops masturbating and admires the creature's pergelian organ. Forsaking love, she engages the beast's lunging and bedlocking for more after the creature is spent. It masculinly reaches, the thing attacks the woman regularly, grasping the soft inner organs and ripping them out.

The remaining human visitors to slither damage. She attempts to phone for help but the beast outside sees the cable. It punishes her through a building, and inside of her light she is captured. The best approach, to human speech (I) has a coming effect as they engage in sex. Its seed foods her womb.

We next see the woman on a cliff edge. Her belly is swollen with unnatural pregnancy. A mysterious fire explodes below. After the closing credits roll, silent, deformed faces melt across the screen.

ENTRALS OF A VIRGIN most fondly recalls Eileen Scott Brown's **THE PREY** (1986), which received a domestic video release. In the aped film (not to be confused with the similarly titled 1977 Norman Warner directed heartbreaker), a lost first grad girl plays unhappy campers and claims the forest for his mate. **THE PREY**'s running time was padded with nature footage more interesting than the central plot. Although Japanese cinematography frequently concentrates on rural settings, its more is still a traditional appreciation of nature than

the need to increase a film's length. Unlike the forgettable American slasher movie mentioned above, **ENTRALS** does not pad out its already brief running time; this churlish viewer really gets to the scolding point.

ENTRALS OF A VIRGIN re-presents classic horror with a heritage of semen and blood. For all contemplative beauty, Japanese horror film (including "pinku eiga") has the Yasuo Masumura's **MOUJIE THE LUNG BEAST** and the often tedious **GUINIGU** series (which is full of little fear or viewers). As the reader can assume, this film is no exception. It balances stock horror movie elements (like scenes, frequent point-of-view photography, characters who wander alone in dark woods, the final cut and mouse game, etc.) with discomfiting gradness. In keeping with the seductive quality of "pink eiga", the film's women exist as fodder. Though effectively photographed, the lack of each male character is nowhere as disturbing. The women are usually humiliated and all but one is splattered. Caught masturbating with a dismembered head (in the scene at least is **RE-ANIMATOR**'s more famous "living head" aspect), the abused woman is monster-raped before having her vagina punctured. The sequence will shock and offend fans of hardcore horror. Moments such as the emasculation may give **ENTRALS OF A VIRGIN** the emotional potency of **CANABAL HOLocaust** (1970) and **MEKONG MANTH** (1980).

The grue of the film is pieced together by functional direction. Save for surreal lighting effects and jet-motor feedback (which does to their random images suggest stream of consciousness), the film was assembled with workable craft. The casual style also influences every depicted space, making the sex and gore more potent, as opposed to the stagy, over-the-top violence in many Western horror and Chinese monster movies. **ENTRALS OF A VIRGIN** delivers its unpleasantness with pornography straightforwardness. The special effects are usually striking with the demerol woman's self-gratification and death as uneasy focus. The creature and its anatomy are convincing low budget highlights.

Although the film's unrelenting state will leave non-Japanese speakers questioning certain story details (as well as the creature's origin), its content and execution are sure to enlighten even jaded horror fans. Beautifully populates horrific Hyper-realism from the apocalyptic **UROTSUKI** (1980) series to the alien-infected **GUY** space opera. **ENTRALS OF A VIRGIN** and the already infamous **GUTS OF A VIRGIN** capture these labor-trading horrors on film. When these monsters outlive their shocking audience, who is to say what nightmare beings will have to be dragged up to disturb us?

SHOJO NO HARAWATA

Rokugatsu-Gekijo (Japan, 1986)
Director: screenplay Goro (aka Kazuo Komizu) Cinematography Akihiko Ito Music Hideki Yoshizawa Film editor Kai Suzuki Lighting Shunji Tanio Art director Hiroshi Mayashida Assistant director Yoshino Fukuhara Producers Matsuo Sato & Hiroshi Kanazawa Cast Saeko Kitayuki, Naomi Hagio, Megumi Kawashima, Jun Nakahara Color Running time 62 minutes Distribution Nikkatsu Release date May 31, 1986

THE GOLEM

STONE-FACED REVIEW
BY LORNE MARSHALL

The Cabinet's tale of a man fashioned from clay to rescue oppressed Jews from a pogrom was initially owned by a German filmmaker, Paul Wegener, until his Czech-French co-production **DER GOLEM (THE MONSTER OF FATE)** (1914), **DER GOLEM UND DIE TAUZENNY: THE GOLEM AND THE SALLERINA** (1917), and **DER GOLEM: WIE ER IN DIE WELT KAM: THE GOLEM** (1920) are all parts of Wegener's impressive legacy. Portraying the creature in all three, he also co-wrote the film and co-produced the first, which is regarded as the best realized rendition of the medieval legend. When Julien Duvivier's **LE GOLEM** was initially released, it wasn't warmly greeted. Despite that, it is an excellent film, as well as one of the relatively rare voyages into terror cinema to come out of France.

An unofficial sequel to the third Wegener film, Duvivier's begins in 1810, following the death of Rabbi Loew, with the now-maimed golem he built safely stored in a tower of the synagogue graciously perched on wooden beams. Loew's successor, Rabbi Jacob, presides over assuaged Prague ghetto community life with children and families (the latter condition results from the nobility finching their grant), whose residents want the monster to be reined to protect them. Jacob assures them the late Rabbi Loew will send them a sign when it is time.

Meanwhile, brewing in the palace of Rudolph II is a kettle of interwoven schemes amongst the king's men (and women) to possess the golem for their private, nefarious objectives. Lang the character has convinced the eligible ruler the creature is his enemy and that peace of mind will be achieved only when the thing is destroyed. The emperor's mistress, Countess Strada wants to use the colossus to stall her lover's marriage to the Queen of Spain. The prefect plays them both against one another, aware that his Lang's underhanded negotiations that are pushing the emperor into the marriage and conspiring with Strada once she has the best chance of obtaining the golem. After an unsuccessful attempt by the prefect's man to procure the monster (one of them is crushed dead with a crumbling stone), Rabbi Jacob is brought to the palace. First, Lang tries to persuade him in an arid aschreage to surrender the golem then Rudolph has the daygman rack the emperor pleads solemnly with him during the torture: "Your suffering hurts me (love mercy on me)".

The countess exploits a French antique dealer's intrusion with her to get him to steal the thing and secrete it away in a

rehe in the palace. While wandering around his domicile, the emperor's tumble into the den of the "ghost" which lowers over other forgotten wretched items. At first regarding the still giant as his friend, he speaks a personal monologue to it, pouring out his soul, then becomes infuriated when the thing does not respond. Later, because of his ability to remember has grown dull, he forgets where he saw the creature.

After receiving a period, the enraptured table conducts a cabaretic serenade to receive guidance from the dead Loew who channeled through one of the participants and prophesies the golem will be invited "after the best roses." Soon after, the table is again erected along with his wife Rachel and many of the followers, all of whom are rounded up by Chancellor Lang as suspects in the theft of the creature. The golem is isolated but Lang still plans to punish the now-released Jews by burning in the stove those he views as sorcerers and hanging the rest as traitors. The monster's fate is no less ominous. It is to be detoured that night. The golem is chained up in a dungeon chamber adjacent to the one harboring the condemned prisoners. Hearing the noise from a pile of hungry lions also caged next to them, Rachel remembers what Loew's agent had mentioned. Sneaking past the animals, she enters the golem's room and recites the secret word on its forehead: "Come to learn life, carrying out the liberation as well as vengeance promised for by the captive Jews."

LE GOLEM is a wonderfully vivid movie with brilliant set designs and a rousing score evocative of contemporary American horn films. Many memorable performances are showcased. Harry Baur as the benign but manipulated and hopelessly mad ruler, Roger Karl as his ruthless advisor Lang, and Jany Holt as the strong but sympathetic Rachel. Though Ferdinand's film's golem is less jaw-cracking than Wegener's (the German's creature was more serene), when it discovered it would be slaughtered after its mission was completed, the thing rebelled; his purposeful, polar-litard demolition of the palace is merely a different interpretation of the dayman, compelling the viewer to participate in the marvellously exhilarating action. Anyhow, by ending with a vast tribulation has overwhelmed its people before finally acting, the colossus is closer to the Japanese *Might Then Is German* counterpart.

Production values are high; however, a few special effects are below average (one character crushed under the behemoth's foot is obviously an inflated doll) and the golem's own destruction, albeit imaginatively rendered, seems wimp compared to the clever denouement of Wegener's version. Also, the conjunction of Asterich in the 1920 film was far more chilling than the appearance of Rabbi Loew's spirit here, which is further made noble in the wake of the recent fraudulent New Age "channelers."

While the cover play by Duvivier and Andre Paul Antoine could be less convoluted, there is a serious attempt to try to capture

the essence of the real Rudolph (Rudolf II), who, though certainly eccentric, was a staunch proponent of science (Johannes Kepler even makes a cameo). There are some amusing touches in the script, like the little yester who can always be heard cackling in the courtyard, even when the golem arrives.

The thing most sorely missed in the version is the most, likely unintentional, propounded by Wegener and the devastation the "monster" brings to its people at the end of the film: there is dire liability in seeking for a "messiah" to relieve people from misery. What is uniquely poignant about Duvivier's version, definitely unintentional, is that it forecasted by just a couple of years the procession of Jews marching out of Czechoslovakia, France and other European countries into the mostly Polish death camps of Hitler a pogrom neither Wegener nor Duvivier could ever have imagined.

Already an established filmmaker, Julien Duvivier went to Hollywood shortly after the picture, creating another many mainstream works: the first American supernatural suspense movie **FLESH AND FANTASY** (1943) (Hawaii profile until his death in 1967) his last film **DIABOLICALLY YOURS**, a murder mystery about an empress victim's ancestor to mock his identity was one more worthwhile stab at another genre that frequently garners disapproval from movie critics.

THE GOLEM. Original French title: **LE GOLEM.** British release title: **THE LEGEND OF PRAGUE.** 8mm abridged version title: **THE MAN OF STONE.** A-B Film (Czechoslovakia)/Metropolis (France), 1936. Director: Julien Duvivier. Screenplay: Julien Duvivier & Andre-Paul Antoine. Based on a play by Jan Werich & Jan Voskovec. Cinematography: Václav Vich & Jan Stráhal. Music: Joseph Krumpholtz. Film editor (US version): Martin J. Lewis. Art directors: A. Andrejoff & S. Kopecky. Cost: Ferdinands Hütt, Harry Baur, Germaine Aussey, Roger Karl, Jany Holt, Gaston Jacquet, Roger Duchesne. Running time: 100 minutes. Black & white.

Scenes of **LE GOLEM** also appear in the 1943 compilation **DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS**.

LE GOLEM

RIGHT: The clay giant crushes a palace guard.

FAR RIGHT: Rabbi Jacob and the Golem



THIS ISSUE'S VIDEO VICTIM:



PHALLUS IN WONDERLAND

GREETINGS FROM THE GRAYTARD, ALL YOU DELA BOTS AND GHOULIE GIRLIES, YOUR VIDEO VOOODOO DOCTOR HERE TO BANG YOUR BRAINS WITH MY VIDEO VIEWS. THIS ISSUE'S TAPE IS THE NEWEST MUSIC VIDEO FROM "THE WORLD'S MOST DISGUSTINGLY REPULSIVE ROCK-N-ROLL BAHG". GWAR, PHALLUS IN WONDERLAND. IN SHORT, IT'S A VIDEO-THRASHING, A BRAIN-BASHING, GUITAR-SLASHING RAUNCH RIOT: IT'S @-RANGED, @-MONIAC @-BAUCHERY ??? I LOVED IT. "PHALLUS" IS BASIC PLOT (?) CONCERNS SLEAZY P. MARTINI'S BOYS' STRUGGLE TO FREE CAPTURED GWAR "MEMBER" (AND ODEROUS' RIGHT-HAND MAN), THE CUTLEFISH OF CTHULLU, FROM THE FORCES OF THEIR HEWTEST ARCH-ENEMIES, THE MORALITY SQUAD. OF COURSE, THAT'S JUST YOUR PASSPORT TO PERVERSION FOR THIS SLICE OF CINEMA-DEMENTIA:

YOU ALSO GET

IT'S A MUSICAL MASSACRE! SIX NEW GWAR SONGS, FROM THE NEW CD, "AMERICA MUST BE DESTROYED" YOUR EARS WILL CHEER FOR LYRICS LIKE...

"SIGNED A MILLION DOLLAR CONTRACT... PUKED ON EVERY PAGE..."

"SLAUGHTERED HALF THE CREW... CAUSE THEY ATE THE DELI TRAY..."

IT'S A BLOOD-BATH BATTLE ROYAL AS GWAR CONFRONTS THEIR ARCH-ENEMY, GRAMBO, LEADER OF THE MORALITY SQUAD, SUPERHEROES DEDICATED TO UPHOLD "DECENCY" IN A NO-OO FIGHT TO THE FIN-ISH: A BOOM TO THE POOM.

GWAR, I'LL PUT AN END TO YOU!

IT'S A ORGY FOR YOUR OPTICAL ORBS! SEE SEX-X-X-XY SLYMENSTRA NYMEN'S FIRE / SHAKE DANCE, SEX-THRILLS OVERKILL.

IT'LL BLOW YOUR MIND!

IT'S DEMOLITION DOUBLED AS ODEROUS URUGHUS GROWS BIG (ULTRAMAN-STYLE) TO BATTLE HIS MUTANT OFFSPRING, THE TYRANT LIZARD, GOR-GOR, IN A RUMBLING, CITY-CRUMBLING CLASH ???

55 MINUTES OF MIND-NUMBING FUN, A STEAMING MIXTURE OF MUSIC AND MADNESS, GUARANTEED TO GROSS YOU OUT. WANT TO HAVE THE MOST PSYCHOTRONIC PARTY ON YOUR BLOCK? ROCK YO' HOUSE WITH THIS TAPE AND GREEN JELLO'S NEW VID! JUST BE SURE YOU DON'T FORGET TO SEND AN INVITATION TO THE VIDEO VOOODOO DOCTOR... LYNDA FERGUSON



THE SOUND OF HORROR

SELDOM SEEN MONSTER EPIC CAPTURED BY TIMOTHY PAXTON

Imagine: watching a monster movie where the title creature makes only two brief appearances during its 88 minute reign of terror. The said invisible alien dinosaur resembling a raggedy cat from some Italian-muscleman epic when visible is a savage beast nevertheless: slasting and rendering the human cast with surprising ease. Despite what you may think, the Spanish made production isn't terrible. For the record, **THE SOUND OF HORROR** is a one-man-against-hell-processed GUTTER LIMITS episode. The characters are half baked clichés—the greedy treasure hunter, the scared up babe, the shy daughter, the macho truck driver. However, as was true for Roger Corman's **THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED** (1956), these cookie-cutter products are perfect foils (and food) for the hungry orler. It's a delightful romp through late 60's Euro science fiction horror.

While spelunking in Greece, treasure hunter professor André (Antonio Casas), his daughter Maria (Soledad Miranda, the late actress who later worked for Spanish director Jesus Franco) and their seductress-cum-archaeologist hired help Starmis dynamite-blast open a cave in search of an elusive golden bounty. They unearth not only a pre-Christen era mummy, but a familiar stone sphere as well, some complete and some broken. Whereas many people (myself included) probably thought that the "honor" of the film's title was going to relate to the "perfectly preserved" Greek mummy, that ugly creature was only a grisly red herring.

André and his crew return to their quaint chateau situated outside the cave in a small valley. There they discuss their discovery while the mummy, Calope, tells supernatural riddles about curses and so forth. The next day a jeep-load of fellow explorers arrive, two more grizzled treasure hunters, the mottled bodied Italian driver Pete, and a beautiful hip-owning Sophia (Ingrid Pitt in an early role). With all the cast members assembled the monster takes action.

Left alone to catalogue the mummy for posterity, Starmis is stalked by an unseen, but very audible monster. His first hears some creepy breathing and heavy footfalls echo in the cavern. Then an unearthly howl rips the air and our young scintilla is slapped about and has his cheek and chest torn open (in an especially gruesome scene considering the SFX for the time and budget). After a few seconds it's all over, and the first victim of this invisible monster lies on the floor of the cave, his body drained of blood.

Mystery envelops the rest of the film as our remaining heroes encounter the horror surrounding the site of the recent butchery. Little it is searched that Starmis may have been murdered because of the ancient Greek treasure involved, nobody can explain how he was killed. Most grave robbers don't disembowel and drain the blood of their victim. Terror grips the small band as the monster leaves the cave at night to prowl. After a few close shaves, the next victim of the party is Calope. Clutching a water bucket, the woman leaves the safety of the enclosure to retrieve coffee, water from a well. The creature's ungodly cry is heard and Calope is reduced to hamburger in a matter of seconds.

The notion of having an invisible monster stalking a human cast does have its limitations. The all too obvious wires and bad mime jobs destroy much of the credibility. **THE SOUND OF HORROR** attempts to build. The scene in which the monster becomes visible for the first time (why is not explained)—when it approaches Maria in her bedroom—is at least that exhilarating. The glimpses we see of the beast happens to illustrate that it is nothing more than a hand puppet. At the conclusion of the film the "sound of horror" again becomes visible. Corman, one of the treasure hunters, traps the monster in Petra's disabled and burning jeep. Through the smoke and flames which consumes the thing, the monster's outline is apparently that of a man in a rubber dinosaur suit. Despite all of these low budget drawbacks, **THE SOUND OF HORROR** does manage to build up a level of weirdness. One creepy scene occurs when the beast is attacking the house and two of our brawny heroes, hurl hatchets at the critter. The whirling blades strike their target (which is identified by its paw prints in a yard covered by thinly spread flour) with a thump in the middle of the air. The monster screams but continues to advance and the hatchets, lost ghost like across the lawn. Another scene has as an additional monster leeching from one of the stone spheres the explorers collected from the

cave. Placed on the mantle piece in the house and warmed by the flames from the hearth, the "egg" splits open and an unearthly slug-like creature with glowing eyes emerges. Acting quickly André grabs a poker, smashes the creepy critter, and Petra deposits the thing in the live place.

The plot never fully explains just what the monster is and why it exists. Is it a curse associated with violating the ancient's tomb, an invisible hellion from the prehistoric past, or is it an alien species of beast whose invasion of Earth was postponed by a few thousand years? André attempts an answer. "When we uncovered these [stone eggs] maybe one rolled into a corner and hatched. Maybe [the monster] absorbed the color of its background and it becomes invisible immediately." While that account is lame, a person wouldn't try to analyze a film like this one. All fun as long if you do, and besides, you aren't meant to go home and spend sleepless nights in bed mulling over the facts.

Possessing an odd mix of the cheap and the creepy, the producers of this film were at least trying to be a little different. You can save a hell of a lot cash when you don't feature a credible full-body suit or some stop motion animation, or any other expensive SFX creation. There aren't that many films which feature such criteria, especially "flesh and blood" monsters taking a mummy usually associated with ghosts and the paranormal. **THE SOUND OF HORROR** is a time sample of taking the dull re-animated dinosaur motif, giving it a twist, and making it at least palatable.

SOUND OF HORROR. Original Spanish title:

EL SONIDO DE LA MUERTE

Alternative Spanish title: EL SONIDO

PREHISTÓRICO. Burbano Films (Spain)

1965. Director: José Antonio Nieves

Conde. Screenplay: Sam X. Abartanel

Grego Talas, José Antonio Nieves Conde

& Gregorio Sacristán. Story: Sam X

Abartanel. Cinematography: Manuel

Barranguar. Music: Luis de Pablo. Film

editor: Margarita de Ochoa. Art directors:

Luis Pérez Espinosa & Gil Pamondo

Special effects: Manuel Baquero

Makeup: Carlos Nin. Producer: Gregorio

Sacristán. Cast: Arturo Fernández,

Soledad Miranda, James Philbrook, José

Bódaro, Antonio Casas, Ingrid Pitt, Lola

Gao, Francisco Piquer. Running time:

91 minutes. Black & white.



TOP: Calope the mad is attacked by the invisible beast. RIGHT: André smashes a newly hatched critter.



Paul Naschy has his heart pierced by a silver dagger in Ljón Klimovsky's **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW**

WEREWOLF'S SHADOW

A MELDRAMATIC MOLINA MONSTERMASH MAULED BY JEFF SEGAL

Available letterboxed off Japanese laserdisc. **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** is an unendorsed edition of Ljón Klimovsky's strongman-turned-actor Jacinto Molina (known internationally as Paul Naschy). Less outrageous than **LOS MONSTROS DEL TERROR** ASSASSINMENT TERROR (1969; see Conrad Widener's review in **MONSTER INTERNATIONAL #1**), **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** is not that effective a horror film. Choppy plotted and edited, it barely suspends our sense of disbelief. However, thanks to the brush chain of Naschy and sporadic atmosphere-laced set pieces, **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** manages to retain an entertaining quality. Fans of pre-World War II horror cinema will find the European actor-director's filmography interesting.

Officials prepare to autopsy the corpse of Waldemar Daninsky, alleged byzantine from rural Europe shot dead with silver bullets. The pentagon sign of a werewolf mysteriously scars Daninsky's chest. One curious pathologist pines several slugs out of the cadaver's unbelching heart.

A full moon peers around thick clouds.

Daninsky's transformation awakes a staid doctor. Grieving menacingly, the beast kills both mortals in a scene reminiscent of **FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN** (1943), except that the latter film is far more explicit.

The wolfen leaps through nearby woodland in search of red harvest. His beasty point of view looks on a hapless woman. The werewolf claws her down, shredding clothes and flesh. Blood-drenched as the victim's barest breasts, is the exploitative violence and nudity which sabotages Naschy's career with the milder work of Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi and the Lon Chaney, both senior and junior. The Spaniard may have a fondness for subtle Universal studio horror films, but his own efforts must be spicy enough to please modern viewers.

In metropolitan France, Elvira (Gaby Fajoly) talks with her police pal Marcel about a university project on European black magic. The woman wants to search Galleries for the tomb of Countess Wardeness, a Hungarian aristocrat who drank venge blood to remain young in the sixteenth century. Accused by peasants of vampirism and witchery, Wardeness was slain. The Countess is shown in all other glory in flashback. The footage, as well as several scene scraps scattered throughout **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW**, is scored with music that recalls the pseudo religious soundtrack of **Amadeus** (Oscar LANGEHE DEL TERROR CIEGO TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD (1971)) and its sequel. Countess Wardeness herself was obviously inspired by Elizabeth Bathory whose historic grooves were chronicled in **COUNTRESS DRACULA** (1972), **CEREMONIA SANGRENTA** and **THE LEGEND OF BLOOD CASTLE** aka **THE FEMALE BUTCHER** (1972) and the most notorious episode of Widener's **Sorcery** aka **CONTESSA IMMORALE** aka **IMMORAL TALES** (1974).

With her friend Genevieve diving, Elvira motors across the French countryside. Genevieve's joke about meeting Count Dracula is not appreciated in this somber realm.

After running low on gas, the girls stop and explore ruined buildings. Elvira is startled by a doll hung upside down off the ceiling. She starts backing out of the dusty room, only to walk into the silent Waldemar Daninsky (Paul Naschy). Both women are invited back to the isolated manor he lives in. Daninsky's pastime is studying the ancient cathedrals of Northern France. During a thunderstorm to dinner, Daninsky grows sulter when asked the possible whereabouts of Countess Wardeness's tomb.

As nature rages outside, the girls bed down for the night. Elvira mortuaries Waldemar but Genevieve defends him as a kindly scientist. The blonde awakens hours later when a strange woman enters their room and reaches for her. To Elvira's dream-lagged awareness, the intruder turns into Daninsky. He promises an explanation to the girls come morning.

The following day, Elvira confesses she has little memory of the incident. The "selective amnesia" repeatedly plagued the cad through **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW**, forcing them to make many uneasy decisions. The accumulated look-alike weak and the film.

Daninsky confesses that he retains custody of his mentally handicapped sister Elizabeth rather than jailing her in a sanatorium. She sometimes wanders harmlessly through the house. However, that afternoon Elizabeth frightles Genevieve, forcing Daninsky to harshly rationstrate his sibling.

The men agree to help his guests find Wardeness's hidden tomb. After much bal, Daninsky and the recovered Genevieve

locate their prize. Incribed on age-worn tombstone are the Countess's years: (1452-1485). Legend demands that supernatural folk be buried at a crossroad where they will be unable to regain of their own volition. Unfortunately, as the epitome note, these locations are pregnant with magic that can be used to summon evil entities.

The centuries have whittled Wandessa down to pale skin and a silver cross-hilted dagger buried in its mouldering noose. Genevieve slices her arm withdrawing the glittering weapon. Blood drips into the Countess's waiting mouth. Though this scene reminds one of Mario Bava's *LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO/BLACK SUNDAY* (1960), there is an interesting difference: The vampire styled with Barbara Steele remained remarkably well preserved—traces of the centuries long burial depicted in *LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO*.

While Dannily and Genevieve re-bury the Countess, Elvira wanders off alone. Aligned garbed in crusty brown robes slowly approaches. To her dismay, the student realizes that the man is no longer human—it's hooded face is skeletal, grily with rotolens. Elvira fuses. Threading corners her claustrophobic de sac lunging toward in slow motion. His attack is interrupted by Dannily, who tunes the silver dagger into the creature's heart, instantly pole-axing the host. The chameleon returns to the house.

A full-moon outside calls malicious beings to life. Wandessa's grave suddenly sprouts pale hands. The spread Countess digs her way to freedom.

Soon a black-robed female coos to Genevieve, luring the entranced student down a misty forested corridor and into the woods. The hooded figure, a young, young fished woman gently dries on Genevieve's wounded arm. The traveler studies ecstatically as her veins are tapped. Countess Wandessa kisses Genevieve's jugular, before lancing the delighted student. Genevieve is adrift in the night.

Elsewhere below, Elvira catches Dannily's cousin Elisabeth draped lifelessly over a fence post. The comforting presence of Wandessa is absent from the residence. Elvira recoils into the false security of her room.

Threats Genevieve call out from a misty hallway attempting to lure Elvira into a cool embrace. Dannily barges between the two women. The cross-hilted knife he feels requires Genevieve and with the lethargic rush of departing night are the vampire's feet in slow motion.

Dannily confers with his upper guest: Walpurga Night is swiftly approaching; that magical evening will allow helix creatures to redistribute strength. Lucifer may relinquish Wandessa orders Elvira away. His handyman, Pier has an automobile to drive her to safety. Elvira professes her love. Dannily refuses to be coaxed, and sends them forward. She is given the silver dagger for protection.

Back at the mansion, Dannily stakes his kidnapped sister through the heart and beheads the corpse. After burying the remains, the butly man waits for night.

Meanwhile, the morbidly talkative Pierre and his passenger come across a tree blocking the road. The Countess and her follower spring their ambush, descending on the car. Elvira brandishes her pitiful magical weapon, igniting the creature. The mortals reluctantly drive back to Dannily.

The disgruntled Dannily knows he may endanger Elvira as much as the vampire, unless alternative arrangements can be made. He has the woman lock herself in a bedroom. The door is barred with a silver chain.

In his own barred room, Dannily spazms when the full moon rises. "We need editing and stop-by-stop makeup; the study

Spanard mutates into a drooling monster. The lycanthropy is fairly equal to the special effect extravaganzas we are spoiled with these days—**THE HOWLING** (1981), **AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON** (1981), and **THE COMPANY OF WOLVES** (1984). Also, the monster makeup is outdone by the Nancy werewolf in director Carol Auer's **EL RETORNO DE WALPURGIS** (1972), released here as **CURSE OF THE DEVIL**. However, the stoic performer's physical skills and eerily always make the best into a credible menace.

While the lunny lady crashes out of a window for murder and mayhem, Elvira's asleep in her room. Suddenly the vampire woman midthrough-the-door. Countess Wandessa pushes a knife into Elvira's neck, collecting the blood in a chalice. The mortals savor their unlikely drink.

Elvira bolts awake, unharmed.

Waldemar staggers back to the house that morning. Last evening's activities left him soiled and dressed in tattered clothing. Dannily describes his cursed background in detail. Lycanthropy first erupted out of the man while he explored Tibet. Dannily fled to Austria, Elisabeth chained him up each full moon night. Unfortunately, the werewolf escaped one evening and caught up at school. Though shot dead by angry villagers, Dannily realized after the silver bullets were pulled from his heart: Only a loved one, using the mystical silver dagger, could kill him permanently. Aware of the vampire's location, the tormented fellow hurried for the tomb of Countess Wandessa. But in claiming the dagger, Dannily and the girls inadvertently loused vindictive evil upon the world.

Promising her support, Elvira continues a passionate relationship with Dannily. But later that evening, she is ambushed by Genevieve. The helpless mortal is caressed and bitten.

Waldemar stages an ambush of his own. The starstruck Genevieve returns to her tomb only to be spotted through the heart. The vampire's collapse, now free of an unnatural, malignant life.

Crouched on the underground tomb's perimeter, Wandessa senses her death awaits her made. She comes along a wall and feels sunrise to a comfortably dark hiding spot.

Dannily returns home and comforts Elvira. Whatever supernatural had Genevieve forged over her had died with the relictions. Waldemar asks Elvira to marauder him to a wall.

when nightfall approaches. After the corpse-pale moon dominates the evening, it is the werewolf who struggles powerfully to free itself.

Dannily's stuffy servant Pier maraudes Elvira. The student is saved from bruising rape when the beast shatters its chains, crashes down a door and confronts the startled villager. They grapple with one another. The soldier mangles him and rushes outside to notify the neighborhood.

The two ill-fated lovers meet again next morning. Dannily and Elvira realize they have no future together (sob) but plan on finishing this matter.

Elvira's police pal Marcel is prowling around the town closest to the centuries old mine. He learns that local women are turning into bloodless corpses. Forensic marches occur regularly. The officer traces Elvira to Waldemar, Dannily's residence. Marcel begins a journey toward the mansion in search of his lady friend and Genevieve. Both girls were overdue to return to the city from this trip.

Meanwhile, a raging villager corners Dannily. After blaming the stranger for every death, the local severely states Dannily with a weak knife—to no effect! After a struggle, the attempted murderer is stabbed to death with his own shov.

Marcel passes the empty vehicle used by the girls. He finally meets Dannily and Elvira. They settle down in the large house for an involved discussion on bizarre phenomena. The pragmatic confronts to accept the magical as an explanation. More concerned over Dannily's state of mind than monsters, Marcel pressures Elvira to leave. Dannily concurs. Walpurga Night will occur soon. Elvira reluctantly obeys him. The two younger people drive offward in Marcel's car.

Dannily continues to hunt for Wandessa's next run by run. He stalks toward the distant knight's tomb. The dagger is out and ready for trouble. Evening is dawning around Dannily.

Marcel's journey to safety is stopped when a corpse slams against the windshield. Wandessa does in on the stalled automobile, rodding like a dash run. Marcel shoots her. Bullets have no effect. The Countess overpowers both mortals.

Elvira and Marcel awaken chained to a tomb wall. Wandessa



Two fanged beauties are ready (and willing) to suck the blood of any human within reach!

will soon offer the humans to Satan as a gift. It's set for early for the sacrifice.

Soon, Walpurgis Night reigns over the territory. Wendeusa calls forth her unholy master. A deluged, misty scene slowly crosses one rocky wall to the unseen owner. Wendeusa's devil is approaching.

Dannely builds into the torches room, breathing his steel dagger. The demonic shadow finally reveals out of the tomb. Dannely starts to flee. Elva but the full moon shows his body with lunar metaphors. How is the striking element who loses Countess Wendeusa. They start into one another. After a violent battle the beast's complexion goes and brings into the vampire. He then her undead life out. The later Countess finally decomposes into an egg-shaped naked corpse. Within a few minutes all that remains of Wendeusa's demise is a bloody and disgusting bones.

Elva recovers her wife and punches the other dagger into the within's heart. The beast collapses. In death, he mutates back into Dannely.

The chains holding Marcella slip off the wall, leaving her. Both he and Elva leave together. In the next scene, Wendeusa's appearance is shown in a dark scene. The last dramatic appearance.



WEREWOLF'S SHADOW, which was released in North America and retitled **THE WEREWOLF VERSUS THE VAMPIRE WOMAN** and **BLOOD MOON** is a movie that strayed from achieving its horror-horror movie objectives. Roughened script and faulty direction leave the film far more of a mess than the average mutated victim.

Naschy's shadow behind the opening tries a full monster garb yet a moment later we see his bullet-hole corpse. The near jolting of the film is compromised by such inconsistencies. In violation of astronomical laws, the full moon seems to occur every evening. It is more of a plot convenience for werewolf appearances than a lunar reality. Oddly enough, Dannely is armed ago has little to do within the movie besides kill giant lizards. Instead, the tortured Walpurgis dominates **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** with repeated acts of heroism. The

noose thing which comes Elva poses up without explanation, perhaps this crucial information (possibly linking the ghost to Wendeusa's past?) was a victim of careless editing. Throughout the movie, vampires are slain with wooden stakes, decapitation AND a silver blade. The metal may be fatal to moderns, but as one of the lesser-known vampire killing methods, the iron should have been elaborated in the script. And Dannely's first confrontation with the Countess was very anticlimactic. The brevity of the battle's aftermath from all of the previous mayhem. Though far more than Naschy's previous **ANATOMY OF TERROR**, for the softman, general, a male vampire is a mummy. Frankenstein's monster and several madcap ideas.

Technically **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** confirms its low budget European origin. Though Spanish movie makers such as Joseph Lanza (**VAMPIRES**, 1974) made powerful but inexpensive light films, director León Kimovsky and actor Antonio Jimeno handled their respective chores awkwardly. Little attempt was made to sustain the same mood created during the opening. Uncontrolled plot contrivances governed all of the movie's horror elements. The monster attacks, resurrects, invading locations, aggressive toward and doses of blood are only used to keep up the film's unsteady pacing. As a result, **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** lingers into old times. This situation is characteristic of even Naschy's superior work: **EL GRAN AMOR DEL CONDE DRACULA**, **COUNT DRACULA'S GREAT LOVE** and **EL JOROBADO DE LA MORGUE**, **THE HUNCHBACK OF THE MORGUE** aka **THE RUE MORGUE MASSACRE** both forcefully directed by Javier Aguirre in 1972.

Despite these jarring shortcomings, **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** is a surprising Kimovsky film. The scenes for the atmosphere, based on A. Garcia Abril's soundtrack (the music heavily cranks with whistles and moans), the director turns his rural landscape into an unending wilderness. The blood and vampire attacks are staged in striking slow motion photography to enhance their nightmarish quality. Kimovsky vindicates his otherwise questionable direction during these scenes. Other nice touches include the bite of Countess Wendeusa, which brings justice; death plus Paul Naschy's mournful chanting. Pity Sheppard may not strain herself fighting out the evil Countess beyond a two-dimensional menace, but the photographs really sell. The vampress is as beautiful and

sinuous as approaching Death. The supporting performances are not rivaled given the nature of **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW**.

The movie would best be as a collection of great horror scenes. Whenever the viewer starts doubting the sanity behind the direction and plotting, **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** unleashes another impressive set piece. Paul Naschy may be less concerned with making good quality monster movies than he is at conjuring up a sense of nostalgia for things gone by.



WEREWOLF'S SHADOW. Original Spanish title: **LA NOCHE DE WALPURGIS**. Original German title: **DIE NACHT DER VAMPIRE**. TV title: **THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN**. British release title: **SHADOW OF THE WEREWOLF**. Spanish-language video title: **LA DAMA SANGRIENTA**. Plata Films (Spain)/HiFi Stereo 70 GmbH (West Germany), 1970. Director: León Kimovsky. Screenplay: Jacinto Molina & Hans Munkel. Cinematography: Leopoldo Vilaseñor. Music: Antón García Abril. Film editor: Antonio Giménez. Art directors: Ludwig Omi & Gumersindo Andrés. Special effects: Antonio Molina. Makeup: José Luis Morales. Cast: Paul Naschy (= Jacinto Molina), Gaby Fuchs, Barbara Capell, Patty Sheppard, Andrés Resino, Yelena Samarina, Julio Peña. Running time: 94 minutes. Color. (The title "The Black Harvest of Countess Dracula", as it appears in some reference books, is spurious — it is a mistranslation of the Italian release title, **LE MESSE NERE DELLA CONTESSA DRACULA**.)

A deadly vampress perishes in one of the traditional manners of eradicating the pesky bloodsuckers.





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PANCOSS Write for readability. Steve Pentone, editor. PO BOX 742, STATION Q, TORONTO, ONTARIO M4T 2H2, CANADA. (No Numero Dos feature for Mass Market). Apparent result is over 80 pages (clammed with photos, ad mats, and articles).

VIDEOGOZE Ed (ed): Robert Sargent, editor. PO Box 9511, Alexandria VA 22304. Issue #4 features an article on Marco Davis & LISA AND THE DEVIL, plus many reviews.

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A HEADY COCKTAIL OF PLEASURE AND PAIN

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